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TRIGGERS OF VIOLENCE IN NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

by

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TRIGGERS OF VIOLENCE IN NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The research for this study has aimed at determining whether New Religious Movements (NRM) shared certain attributes (i.e., characteristics) that might help determine their propensity for violence. The goal was a model that a government or civil authority could use to compare a budding religious movement to determine whether it might become violent. This study only included post-World War II NRMs to limit the scope of research, and religious sects were excluded. A review of relevant literature in the study of NRMs and religious violence highlighted ten attributes that seemed to be prevalent in violent NRMs: dramatic denouements, strict rule of law/high commitment, supernaturalism, new religion/teachings, isolationism, apocalyptic teachings, charismatic leader, absolute authority, group fragility, and repression. These ten attributes were used to grade all of the NRMs and the results were analyzed using Social Network Analysis (SNA) techniques for similarity. The results showed that violent NRMs clustered together meaning that they were more closely associated with certain attributes. The attribute scores for dramatic denouements, strict rule of law, apocalyptic teachings, and isolationism were substantially more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent NRMs.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ATF-Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms

CNN-Cable News Network

FBI-Federal Bureau of Investigations

FDA- Food and Drug Association

GWU-George Washington University

HRT-Hostage Rescue Team

IRS-Internal Revenue Service

NRM-New Religious Movement

ORA-Organization Risk Analyzer

OTO-Ordo Templi Orientis

SC-Similarity Correlation

SDA-Seventh-day Adventists

SNA-Social Network Analysis

WMD-Weapon of Mass Destruction

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1995 a religious group in Japan named Aum Shinrikyo shocked the world with an attack on Japanese citizens using sarin gas. Although the attack only killed 13, it wounded 6,252 Japanese civilians.¹ In Uganda on 17 March 2000, the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments either committed a mass suicide or mass murder against its members, and 780 lives were lost.² There are numerous other incidents where violence has been committed by religious groups or cults, either toward themselves or others. Some of these are legendary, ranging from the Branch Davidians and their leader, David Koresh, to the Jonestown Kool-Aid Massacre, to Heaven's Gate. How could these groups operate in and amongst their countries, and how can they be prevented so that future tragedies can be avoided? Are there any common threads between all of these groups that can be identified such that a country could take action to stop it? The goal of this study is to answer this question, utilizing elements of social network software to show relationships between violent markers in New Religious Movements (NRMs), to determine if a threshold has been crossed whereby violence could be perpetrated. The paper will lay out common themes or markers among violent NRMs, a case study of a few select NRMs, a discussion of grading schema for the social analysis, and finally, results of the analysis.

B. RESEARCH QUESTION

What factor(s) influence the likelihood that an NRM will perform a violent act and can they be quantified to identify a certain threshold or trigger point where they should be monitored more closely?

¹ Richard Danzig et al., "Aum Shinrikyo: Insights Into How Terrorists Develop Biological and Chemical Weapons," *Center for New American Security*, July 7, 2011, accessed November 4, 2011, http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_AumShinrikyo_Danzig_1.pdf, 32.

² David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Cults, Religion & Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 238.

C. DEFINITION OF NRM AND SCOPE OF STUDY

Definitions of religions are as numerous as types of religions. In a thorough discussion, Christiano, Swatos and Kivisto begin by quoting Durkheim's classic definition as "A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden-beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them."³ This definition is fairly inclusive compared to the six components of Max Weber's definition of religion:

(1) a belief in one or several of a wide-ranging variety of supernatural powers, that are (2) evidenced in a variety of charismatic manifestations, (3) articulated through symbolic expressions, (4) responded to in a variety of forms, (5) under the guidance of various types of leaders, (6) in a variety of patterns of relationships significantly determined by the patterned behavior of the lay people of the community.⁴

Christiano, Swatos and Kivisto ultimately conclude that a definition of religions "is a patterning of social relationships around perceived supermundane power..." and "ethical considerations."⁵ They discuss the definition of supermundane, which means "extraordinary." By extraordinary, Christiano, Swatos, and Kivisto mean "different" from normalcy.⁶ Toft, Philpott, and Shah, utilize a definition written by William Alston that includes seven elements of religion that are not unlike the above. They include:

(1) a belief in a supernatural being (or beings); (2) prayers or communication with that or those beings; (3) transcendent realities, including 'heaven,' 'paradise,' or 'enlightenment'; (4) a distinction between the sacred and the profane and between ritual acts and sacred objects; (5) a view that explains both the world as a whole and humanity's proper relation to it; (6) a code of conduct in line with that worldview; and (7) a temporal community bound by its adherence to these elements.⁷

³ Kevin J. Christiano, William H. Swatos, Jr. and Peter Kivisto, *Sociology of Religion* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 5.

⁴ Christiano et. al., *Sociology of Religion*, 5.

⁵ Christiano et. al., *Sociology of Religion*, 18.

⁶ Christiano et. al., *Sociology of Religion*, 18.

⁷ Monica Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Shah, *God's Century* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011), 21.

These definitions share commonalities that stand out toward a useful NRM definition that include supernaturalism, adherence to societal norms, and some form of ethics. William Bainbridge and Rodney Stark define a sect as an offshoot of a religion that is attempting to restore the religion to some previous state of purity.⁸ They differentiate from a sect as one introducing something new.⁹ Christiano et al. note that the term “cult” has become a pejorative term.¹⁰ This tension is most likely present as one of the definitional items from above are broken, be it ethics, or distinctions of the profane and sacred. A less pejorative term that is used is New Religious Movements.

The NRMs for this study came from two separate databases to eliminate selection bias and provide a comprehensive list. The databases were from The University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University.¹¹¹² NRMs will be analyzed from the era of 1945 (post–World War II) and beyond. We do not intend to get bogged down in semantics of cult versus NRM. Our study is a look at NRMs that never became violent and assimilated into society or faded from existence, and those that are known violent NRMs. We will include some NRMs that border on the dividing line between sect and NRM, such as the Branch Davidians, who were an offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventists, along with some added properties.

D. VIOLENT MARKERS

Much of the relevant literature written about NRMs and violence discusses various themes that are pervasive in violent NRMs. Unfortunately, this literature in many cases points to esoteric concepts such as group isolation, grandiosity and paranoia of the leader, absolute dominion of the leader, and oppressive government interaction towards

⁸ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996), 33.

⁹ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 33.

¹⁰ Christiano et. al., *Sociology of Religion*, 10.

¹¹ The Religious Movements Homepage Project @ The University of Virginia, University of Virginia, accessed 1 September 2012. <http://web.archive.org/web/20060902232910/http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/profiles/listalpha.htm>.

¹² World Religions & Spirituality Project VCU, Virginia Commonwealth University, accessed 1 September 2012. <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/index.html>.

the NRM.¹³ David Bromley and J. Gordon Melton assert that a greater understanding of NRMs is the proper way to identify them and mathematical methods should be avoided.¹⁴ Other researchers offer different varying factors, which they deem omnipresent in violent NRMs.

Table 1 highlights a list of incidental markers that possibly contribute to roles of violence in religious movements or cults. It is very important to note that each of these concepts taken alone does not indicate that a group will become violent. Charismatic leadership, for instance, can be found on many sports teams or peaceful religions and does not indicate violence. However, when it is coupled with isolationism, supernaturalism, and apocalyptic teachings to varying degrees, violence may occur. Aum Shinrikyo is a clear example of a NRM that exhibited these three traits. Scholars have identified these characteristics as possible markers of violence.

Table 1. Markers of Violence

Markers	Example
Charismatic Leadership	Jim Jones, David Koresh
Absolute Leader Authority	Aum Shinrikyo, David Koresh
Supernaturalism	Hale Bopp
Apocalyptic Teachings	Aum Shinrikyo, Branch Davidians
Strict Rule of Law/High Commitment	Peoples Temple, Aum Shinrikyo, Mormonism
Isolationism	
Group Fragility	Aum Shinrikyo, Peoples Temple
Repression from State/Politics	Aum Shinrikyo, Peoples Temple
Dramatic Denouements	Branch Davidians, Aum Shinrikyo
New Religion or New Teachings	Aum Shinrikyo

¹³ Thomas Robbins, "Volatility in Religious Movements," in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 71.

¹⁴ Bromley and Melton, *Cults*, 53.

David Bromley and J. Gordon Melton note that charismatic leadership is often a reason for violence in NRMs.¹⁵ Lorne Dawson discusses this at length and concludes that other factors must be present before violence creeps into the equation. These can include increasing need for followers to commit acts to be accepted by the leader, and the need for the leader to continually demonstrate successes coupled with “aggrandizement of the leader’s power, along with the increased homogenization and dependency of their followers, thereby setting the conditions for charismatic leaders to indulge the ‘darker desires of their subconscious.’”¹⁶ These factors, however, do not indicate that violence or problems will occur and Dawson cites examples of charismatic leaders that have been able to continue their rule and overcome these problems.¹⁷ Marc Galanter, as summarized by Thomas Robbins, has a slightly different view and notes that a factor for violence from a charismatic leader is, “grandiosity and paranoia characterizing the leader’s self-concept (which isolates him).”¹⁸ Galanter further argues that absolute leader authority is required for violence. In absolute authority, the leader can supersede local state authority or laws and further isolate followers from normative views.

Apocalypse, millennialism, or doomsday prophecies are among the most oft cited reasons for NRMs to use violent acts as a means to either transcend the impending doom or trigger the apocalypse. Numerous NRMs have taken this view including Peoples Temple, Heaven’s Gate, and Order of the Solar Temple.¹⁹ Robbins notes that, “Groups with apocalyptic expectations are likely to anticipate that the imminent last days will be suffused with violence and persecution, which will be particularly directed against the saints.”²⁰ Preparations for end times are not necessarily an indicator that violence will occur. For instance, a 2012 National Geographic Channel television series highlights the

¹⁵ Bromley and Melton, *Cults*, 46.

¹⁶ Lorne Dawson, “Crises of charismatic Legitimacy and violent behavior in new religious movements,” in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 98.

¹⁷ Dawson, “Crises,” 98.

¹⁸ Robbins, “Volatility,” 71.

¹⁹ Robbins, “Volatility,” 61.

²⁰ Robbins, “Volatility,” 62.

preparations of doomsday groups; however, these groups have not committed violence against anyone. When this is paired with an entity trying to disarm the group, such as the Branch Davidians, violence can occur. As Lorne Dawson notes, “If a group subscribes to an apocalyptic worldview, this helps to justify and perpetuate the vicious cycle of fear, resistance, homogenization, domination, and social isolation. Faced with a crisis, such groups are far more likely to adopt violent solutions.”²¹ Lastly, Robbins cites theories of Catherine Wessinger where she discusses “catastrophic millennialism.”²² Catastrophic millennialists are different from isolated apocalyptic groups, as they perceive that the end is soon and they must precipitate violence to cleanse the world of evil beforehand.

Another common theme of violent groups is that they have a strict internal rule of law and demand a high level of commitment, which involves isolation from the population. Iannaccone states that high commitment helps to eliminate “free riders” and maintain a small group of devoted people to the cause.²³ The emergences of compounds such as Jonestown or Mount Carmel are examples of a high level of commitment required for members to enter. Members had to give up their lives to move to these locations. Aum Shinrikyo is another example of high commitment organization. Members had to give all of their money, sell their property, commit to the leader, and sometimes even go through months long initiation practices.²⁴

Group fragility is a factor that can happen in a group when the prophecies or promises fail, or conflict occurs in a religious group. When this happens, the group may be driven to extreme action. Wessinger “highlights ‘fragile’ movements that, as a consequence of internal conflicts, disconfirmation of prophecy, conditions undermining a leader’s charisma, or the conspicuous failure to achieve unrealistic goals set by a grandiose leader, are particularly susceptible to being destabilized by external pressure

²¹ Dawson, “Crises,” 98.

²² Robbins, “Volatility,” 63.

²³ Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives,” *Journal of Political Economy* 100 (1992): 272, accessed 27 September 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2138608>.

²⁴ Robert Jay Lifton, *Destroying the World to Save it*, (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1999), 24.

and are the least tolerant of boundary conflict.”²⁵ Aum Shinrikyo suffered from this with political failures. Peoples Temple leader Jim Jones was in ill health and the group was having political troubles.²⁶ The collision of group fragility with the NRMs desires can lead to an increased propensity for violence.

Repression from state governments or politics can instigate violence in multiple forms. For instance, Iannaccone and Berman note that religious “groups chose violence to improve the lot of their institutions and constituents, by resisting repression and gaining political power.”²⁷ Stuart Wright summarizes Hall and Schuyler and states they “conclude that ‘the most extreme cases of collective religious violence do not emerge from an intrinsic property of the groups themselves’ but rather as ‘conflicts between utopian religious movements, on the one hand, and on the other, ideological proponents of the social order, seeking to control ‘cults’ through loosely institutionalized, emergent oppositional alliances.’”²⁸

Another factor is what are known as dramatic denouements, which are the result of the oppression by a government or other group that leads a group to perceive that their existence or identity is in jeopardy and must take violent action to protect themselves. David Bromley notes four levels of conflict between groups and the last is dramatic denouement, “in which polarization and destabilization of dangerous relationships lead to orientation by parties as ‘subversive’ and to projects of final reckoning intended to reverse power and moral relationships.”²⁹ In other words, dramatic denouement is simply a fight-or-flight mentality where the NRM feels that their existence is in jeopardy, or they are fulfilling an end of time prophesy. Dramatic denouements are present in many

²⁵ Robbins, “Volatility,” 75.

²⁶ Robbins, “Volatility,” 75.

²⁷ Laurence R. Iannaccone and Eli Berman. “Religious Extremism: The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly.” *Public Choice* 128 (2006): 121, accessed 28 July 2011, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30026636>.

²⁸ Stuart A. Wright, “Public Agency Involvement in Government-Religious Movement Confrontations,” in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108.

²⁹ David G. Bromley, “Dramatic Denouements,” in *Cults, Religion, and Violence*, ed. David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 12.

NRMs such as Branch Davidians, Jim Jones, and Aum Shinrikyo. A measurement of oppression can help determine if a critical juncture has been reached.

The last factor that can be present is a measure of the NRMs deviation from the mainstream and prophecy new ideologies. This factor taken alone does not constitute violence but could be a part of the puzzle. Scientology, for instance, conscripted an completely new religion based upon the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard. The Branch Davidians annulled marriages and pledged their wives to David Koresh. The underlying ideology and the strength of their desire could be a factor in the group determining if violence is warranted.

With these markers identified, the next step in this study is to analyze four NRMs looking for these markers and their intensities. The NRMs that are analyzed are Aum Shinrikyo, Branch Davidians, People's Temple, and the Church of Scientology, representing NRMs across the spectrum of violence. Aum Shinrikyo was selected because they attempted to commit mass violence against others with a WMD attack. The Branch Davidians were selected because they committed violence against others in self-defense. The People's Temple was examined because they committed violence primarily against themselves but also against others by whom they felt threatened. Scientology was selected in order to include a case study of a nonviolent NRM. These four NRMs will then be graded upon their level of intensity of these markers, to determine a model whereby other NRMs can be compared and analyzed against.

II. CASE STUDIES

A. AUM SHINRIKYO

1. Introduction

In the spring of 1995, a NRM in Japan named Aum Shinrikyo shocked the world with an attack on Japanese citizens using sarin gas. Although the attack only killed 13 people, it wounded a total of 6,252 civilians.³⁰ This attack was particularly shocking in that it used Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and it occurred in the mostly peaceful society of Japan. Japanese authorities targeted the group and arrested many of its members, including its charismatic leader Shoko Asahara. Aum Shinrikyo emerged as part of a wider trend of “new religions” in Japan whose charismatic leaders recruited socially marginalized, alienated, and disillusioned followers.

This chapter begins with an overview of the conditions in Japan that allowed Aum Shinrikyo to emerge during an era that spawned the growth of “new age religions.”³¹ Aum Shinrikyo even branched out beyond Japan and managed to gather followers in Russia, the United States, Australia, and Germany.³² It then turns to a discussion of the rise of the NRM itself. Lastly, it looks at the it’s transition to violence and the wider impact of the organization during its emergence, consolidation and eventual decline.

2. Background

New age religions became popular in Japan in the late 1980s and into the 1990s. It was not the first wave of religious soul searching that appeared after World War II, but it was out of this second wave that Aum Shinrikyo originated. Japan had built up considerable wealth in the 1980s and some people began to lose their sense of belonging

³⁰ Richard Danzig et al., “Aum Shinrikyo,” 32.

³¹ New Age religions are described by Daniel Metraux as those which religions which grew in Japan and were there to “provide answers for and to address the special needs of certain constituencies that felt left out or alienated from the progress of mainstream society.” Daniel A. Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo’s Impact on Japanese Society* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 4.

³² Daniel A. Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo’s Impact on Japanese Society* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 125.

and were looking for greater meaning in their lives. This soul searching led many to the appeals of Aum. Daniel Metraux, in his book *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact on Japanese Society*, quotes Japanese author Inagaki Hisakazu:

[When] the rapid economic growth of postwar Japan began to decelerate. . . , many people found that simply acquiring material affluence did not satisfy. After Japan had joined the ranks of the great economic powers, people began to lose a clear sense of purpose in their lives. This created a void, both mentally and spiritually, that extended to the very depths of their souls. Some people undertook Yoga training, engaged in mystical meditation and explored the occult. They sought unusual, exotic experiences that would lift them above the humdrum routine of an affluent Japan . . . to find solace in esoteric mysticism or in the New Age movement.³³

Aum Shinrikyo encouraged many people to leave their everyday, somewhat scripted lives, and reject society. The NRM promised isolated communities called Lotus Villages where followers could live and practice their religion separate from Japanese society. Metraux notes that Japan does not have a social support system for the “marginalized” and Aum Shinrikyo’s religion and separation from society were appealing to those who did not fit in to the social norm.³⁴ In joining Aum Shinrikyo, followers met many of the principles of basic human behavior outlined by Dr. Robert Cialdini.³⁵ They found “authority” in Shoko Asahara, “social proof” and “liking” with the other followers, and “commitment” to a cause.

The followers of Aum Shinrikyo can be categorized into four main groups.³⁶ The first is ordinary people who did not stand out in any way, what Americans would call blue-collar or uneducated workers. The second group is alienated students, which includes dropouts and students who, for a variety of reasons, could not make it in the corporate Japanese world. The third category is the academics. These academics sought a blending of religion and science versus the separation they found in their education. The

³³ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 8.

³⁴ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 9.

³⁵ Robert Cialdini, *Influence, Science and Practice*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 2001), iii.

³⁶ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 87.

final category of followers is the old members, who were primarily older women who were bored with their lives as housewives or those who had become widows. According to Metraux, “These followers of Aum joined because they believed that Aum offered them a new, meaningful, productive and peaceful way of life...Asahara left them stranded without help or resources. Metaphorically, he offered them a loving relationship, but in the end he had ravished them instead.”³⁷

3. The Rise of the NRM and its Charismatic Leader

Shoko Asahara’s youth started him down the path of becoming a NRM leader. He was born with the name Chizuo Matsumoto in 1955 into a poor family, one of seven children. He was completely blind in one eye and partially in the other. He was able to go to a regular school, but his parents sent him to a free blind school with his siblings, who were also blind. Partial sight in a blind school afforded Matsumoto advantages over the other students. He bullied and forced them to fight one another in wrestling matches. When the students did not meet his standards, he showed them the proper way it should be done. He would at times exhibit kindness towards some students and resentment or anger towards others.³⁸

During his years at the boarding school, Matsumoto first felt rejection from fellow students. He was teased and called “burakumin,” meaning “a village person.”³⁹ He was also at times labeled a Korean, which is pejorative in Japanese culture. Matsumoto enjoyed school plays and science fiction. However, he ran for class head multiple times, unsuccessfully, which left him feeling rejected. He even lashed out and blamed teachers for slandering him. This rejection continued beyond his school years.

Robert Lifton states that Matsumoto “wavered between fantasies of mainstream power (entering Tokyo law school or becoming prime minister) and radical rebelliousness (lawbreaking and a fascination with Mao [Zedong]).”⁴⁰ Matsumoto moved

³⁷ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo’s Impact*, 112.

³⁸ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 15.

³⁹ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 15.

⁴⁰ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 17.

to Tokyo and attempted to further his education, but he failed the entrance school examinations.⁴¹ Afterwards, he met someone, married, and even had children. He then opened an herbal medicine shop, but was ultimately arrested for selling fake medicines. His arrest sent him into bankruptcy, and he began looking into “fortune telling, Taoist medicine, and related expressions of divination and mysticism.”⁴² According to Matsumoto, “One day I stopped fooling myself altogether and thought: ‘What am I living for? Is there anything absolute, does true happiness really exist in this world? If so, can I get it?’ I did not realize at this point that what my soul was looking for was enlightenment.”⁴³

In the early 80s, Matsumoto got involved in the “new age religions” of Japan. He joined an existing religion called Agonshu, and he experienced the power of a guru or religious leader.⁴⁴ Matsumoto would eventually learn of the teachings of Nostradamus and combine this with prophecies of the book of Revelations from the bible, Buddhism, Hinduism, and philosophies of Freemasons and Jewish control of the world.⁴⁵ This would have an impact later as Matsumoto would “connect Armageddon not only with his own Hindu god Shiva, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the figure of Jesus but also with religious martyrs in general, nuclear holocaust, and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.”⁴⁶

A few years after joining Agonshu, Chizouo Matsumoto left and founded his own religion called Aum Shinsen no Kai, meaning “Aum Mountain Wizards.”⁴⁷ During this time, Matsumoto changed his name to Shoko Asahara, which has a deeper Buddhist meaning. Asahara’s popularity began to grow, and he gained further notoriety when

⁴¹ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 108.

⁴² Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 17.

⁴³ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 18.

⁴⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 108.

⁴⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 110.

⁴⁶ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 48.

⁴⁷ Danzig et al., “Aum Shinrikyo,” 8.

pictured “levitating” on the cover of a new religion magazine.⁴⁸ This photographic trickery made him appear that he had achieved a level of “extraordinarily high spiritual attainment.”⁴⁹ He claims he later received a vision from the Hindu god Shiva who ordained him “the god of light who leads the armies of the gods”⁵⁰

Shortly after his publicized vision, Asahara renamed his organization Aum Shinrikyo and the group began to grow. Shinrikyo carried more weight meaning “religious teaching” of “supreme truth.”⁵¹ Asahara’s sermons began to claim that followers had to become his “clones.” He preached that supreme enlightenment could be achieved through suppression of one’s desires, intense meditation, and becoming joined with the guru. One of his early disciples helped him to create a headset, which could transfer his brain waves to followers. He would later advocate followers drinking his blood or engaging in tantric sex with him as means of connecting. As members joined they had to commit to Asahara’s absolute authority, separating themselves completely from their previous lives, strict rule of law, and committing all of their money and possessions to Aum Shinrikyo.⁵²

As Aum Shinrikyo continued to grow, Shoko Asahara set up a strict organization. At the top was Asahara, the guru. Just below that was the level of “great master,” which was only attained by six people. The next level was the “truly enlightened.” Below that were the entrants. Asahara further organized the group into ministries which Lifton notes some compare to Japanese government prior to World War II.⁵³

Aum Shinrikyo did not limit its activities to Japan alone. Aum campaigned heavily in Russia and claimed it had thirty thousand members.⁵⁴ Aum Shinrikyo had a similar appeal to Russian citizens who were disenfranchised with their new lives after the

⁴⁸ Danzig et al., “Aum Shinrikyo,” 8.

⁴⁹ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 20.

⁵⁰ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 20.

⁵¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 109.

⁵² Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 20, 109.

⁵³ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 35.

⁵⁴ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo’s Impact*, 113.

fall of communism. Shoko Asahara even garnered enough attention to gain access to the Russian vice president. Aum Shinrikyo also gained a few followers in the United States and Germany, but their activities were mostly aligned with the purchase of advanced technical equipment. Aum's foray into Australia was supposedly aligned with a purchase of land for testing of weapon materials.⁵⁵

4. Transition to Violence

In 1990, Shoko Asahara, along with others in Aum, ran for parliament in Japan's national elections. They campaigned on their religious principles, and followers were often seen standing at subway platforms wearing Asahara masks, chanting, meditating, and singing Aum Shinrikyo songs. They were soundly defeated and Metreaux claims that this was another blow to Asahara and further gave him a feeling of helplessness towards changing society.⁵⁶ Danzig et al. note, "Asahara reasoned that if he failed to gain control of the state through elections...he would go ahead with his plan for destruction."⁵⁷ To further insult Asahara, some of the followers who had campaigned with him abandoned the organization after being out in the real world.⁵⁸

Early in Aum Shinrikyo's history the guru preached the value of good and bad karma. When followers had bad thoughts, actions, or were simply attempting to reach the next level in the organization, they could excise the bad karma from themselves by various self-induced painful procedures. These ascetic practices range from solitary confinement in hot conditions to water immersion. According to Catherine Wessinger, these practices were the start of the violence that was to come, and if they "were reluctant to engage in these extreme forms of asceticism, they were coerced or beaten to make

⁵⁵ Metreaux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 119–121.

⁵⁶ Metreaux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 42.

⁵⁷ Danzig et al., "Aum Shinrikyo," 13.

⁵⁸ Danzig et al., "Aum Shinrikyo," 15.

them do so.”⁵⁹ She then summarizes Ian Reader by saying that salvation “was dependent on their ascetic practice and devotion to the guru.”⁶⁰

The next major religious principle that Asahara adopted and manipulated for his use was a concept called *poa* derived from Vajrayana. This was a “spiritual exercise performed when one is dying, sometimes with the aid of a guru, a ‘transference of consciousness’ from the bodily ‘earth plane’ to the ‘after-death’ plane that enables one to achieve a higher realm in the next rebirth...”⁶¹ Asahara distorted this concept to a level where someone could be killed so they could be propelled in the next life. It took on the form whereby the killer would achieve a higher setting or better karma by killing or *poa*’ing someone who was about to do something wrong. In essence, it gave capability for someone to kill someone else to save him or her. “As the religious scholar Manabu Watanabe explains, there was ‘no room for people other than Shoko Asahara to live in a world where Aum Shinrikyo reign[ed].’ That was true because all Aum disciples were to become his clones and all ‘others’ in the world were to be subjected to *poa*.”⁶² The benefit and difference from the radical Islamist *Takfir* practice or justification for killing of other Muslims, is that the killer also receives a benefit.

After Aum Shinrikyo separated followers from their lives and possessions, gave people religious backing to commit violence, and stirred up emotions of Armageddon and the end of the world, it did not take long for violence to enter the picture. His sermons changed from preparing for Armageddon (which he predicted would come in 1999) to accelerating and helping it along. He settled on a WMD attack to start World War III, and he believed that he and his followers would be protected from it and they would help

⁵⁹ Catherine Wessinger, *How the Millennium Comes Violently* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000), 123

⁶⁰ Wessinger, *How the Millenium*, 123.

⁶¹ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 27.

⁶² Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 69.

restart the world. One of Aum's lieutenants noted that in 1989 Asahara began speaking of transitioning from a religious organization to a military organization to bring about Armageddon.⁶³

The violent side of Aum Shinrikyo began in 1989. A member died during one of the rituals, and his friend was upset over this. He planned to leave the group and even threatened to kill Asahara. Asahara had him "*poa'd*" by other members of the group. Although some authors note higher numbers, Japanese police determined that more than 30 people were murdered between 1988 and 1995. The majorities of these were tied to disgruntled members of Aum Shinrikyo or people involved in anti-Aum activities.⁶⁴

Aum Shinrikyo began researching WMD weapons around 1989 and attempted attacks shortly thereafter. The first known attack was with botulinum at U.S. military bases in Japan and at Narita airport. They continued a few years later with more attempted botulinum and anthrax attacks that never amounted to more than complaints of foul odors.⁶⁵ In 1993 they began to work with sarin gas and had much more success. What followed were attempts at rival organizations and attorneys involved in counter-Aum legal proceedings. They attempted to deploy the gas from remote control helicopters and even experimented with pouring it over the air intake valve of a car. Aum's first successful release of sarin gas occurred in Matsumoto when they used a van to deploy the gas. It was aimed at three judges that were involved in a fraud case against Aum. The attack attempted to slow the proceedings and they succeeded in sickening the judges and killing seven others while wounding a total of 144 people. What followed were multiple targeted killing attempts with VX compounds. The only successful delivery occurred when they injected it into a jogger. The subway attacks were the culmination of the program. There were a few small random attempts afterward, but the subway attack was the last main attempt.⁶⁶ By this time, the Japanese government was

⁶³ Danzig et al., "Aum Shinrikyo," 13.

⁶⁴ Wessinger, *How the Millenium*, 123.

⁶⁵ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 39.

⁶⁶ "Chronology of Aum Shinrikyo's CBW Activities," Monterey Institute for International Studies, 2001, accessed 18 November 2011, http://cns.miiis.edu/reports/pdfs/aum_chrn.pdf.

closing in on Aum Shinrikyo and the subway attack was only meant as a diversionary attack. The main attempt was intended to occur six months later with sarin delivered over Tokyo from a helicopter purchased from Russia. Additionally, the mixture used in the subway attacks was much less concentrated than what had previously been available. Aum had recently moved its main production facility, under fear of being raided, and the new mixture was not as pure.⁶⁷

5. Fallout

Nearly a month after the subway attacks the Japanese authorities clamped down on Aum Shinrikyo. Nearly all of the leaders were arrested and many of them are on death row. Previously, Aum had been left alone with its legal religious status and lax oversight by the government. However, after the attack, Japan stripped Aum of its religious status and declared it bankrupt. It then began to sell off its real estate holdings. The government did not ban the NRM outright, however.⁶⁸ Within a few years, the NRM was down to only several thousand members.⁶⁹

6. Conclusion

Aum Shinrikyo was a religious organization that attempted to bring about the end of the world. Aum Shinrikyo emerged in a strict Japanese conformist society. It found success-recruiting members of Japanese society and Russian society who did not fit in and had few other options to turn to. The leader Asahara Shoko founded Aum Shinrikyo and its members are still devoted to his teachings. The NRM ultimately turned violent and committed many murders, culminating in the failed attempt to bring about the apocalypse. Luckily, it failed at the massive scale WMD attack that could have killed millions.

⁶⁷ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 40.

⁶⁸ Metraux, *Aum Shinrikyo's Impact*, 20.

⁶⁹ Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 229.

B. BRANCH DAVIDIANS

1. Introduction

In the spring of 1992, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) received a complaint that a group called the Branch Davidians was acquiring large stockpiles of firearms and explosives to prepare for the end of civilization, which they believed was approaching. This opened an investigation that would lead to a search warrant for the property on Mount Carmel in Waco, Texas. The ATF attained warrants against the leader David Koresh and planned to utilize the element of surprise to serve the warrants. The Branch Davidians were notified of the raid and in the ensuing skirmish four ATF agents and six Branch Davidians were killed.⁷⁰ The Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) was called in and the siege continued for fifty-one days, with the majority of the people refusing to surrender. On 19 April 1993, Attorney General Janet Reno authorized the use of force at the Branch Davidian compound. A fire broke out inside the compound and eighty-one people inside perished, including twenty-five children.⁷¹

2. Prophecy in the book of Revelation

The Branch Davidians claimed to base their beliefs on the Bible, which they believed was the infallible word of God.⁷² This view is not exclusive to the Branch Davidians; there are several mainstream denominations that hold the same view. The leader of the Branch Davidians, David Koresh, came from the Seventh-day Adventists (SDA) church, hence the emphasis on prophecy and the historicist hermeneutic approach to interpreting the Bible, which believes that the book of Revelation is a “panorama of human history from the time of John himself to the dawn of the millennium and perhaps a little beyond.”⁷³ This chronological approach means that through careful study one could determine where they are on this map of history. The Branch Davidians, under the

⁷⁰M. R. Haberfeld and Agostino Von Hassell, *A New Understanding of Terrorism: Case Studies, Trajectories and Lessons Learned*, (New York: Springer, 2009), 46.

⁷¹Brandon M. Stickney, *All-American Monster: The Unauthorized Biography of Timothy McVeigh* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1996), Kindle edition, 1503–1504.

⁷²Kenneth G. C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: the History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect*, (Oxford, NY, 2006), 25–26.

⁷³Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 31.

leadership of David Koresh, believed in utilizing the historical approach known as futurism in interpreting the book of Revelation.⁷⁴ A futuristic reading of the book of Revelation views most of the book as a description of the last few years of the end times.⁷⁵ David Koresh declared that he was the white horseman identified in Revelation 19, marking the beginning of the prophecy fulfillment and the beginning of the last days and nearing the end of the world.⁷⁶

3. Leadership Background

The “Branch” Davidians were an offshoot of the older “Davidian” tradition that started in 1929 and had been in Waco since 1935.⁷⁷ The Branch Davidians trace their origin back to the work of Viktor Houteff, a Bulgarian immigrant who joined the SDA movement in 1919.⁷⁸ In 1929 Houteff published *The Shepherd’s Rod*, in which he claimed that the SDA church had abandoned scriptural teachings and had turned to materialism and worldliness.⁷⁹ The publication eventually led to Houteff being excommunicated from the SDA church before founding Mount Carmel in 1935.⁸⁰ Throughout their history neither the Davidians nor the Branch Davidians felt it was necessary for them to cut ties from the original movement. In fact, Houteff did not question the SDA’s identity as the authentic church.⁸¹ The Davidians continued in Mount Carmel until 12 March 1962, when they were dissolved because followers found a lack of harmony between *The Shepherd’s Rod* and the Bible.⁸²

⁷⁴Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 32.

⁷⁵Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 31.

⁷⁶Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 26, 33.

⁷⁷Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 5.

⁷⁸James Beverley, *Nelson’s Illustrated Guide to Religions: A Comprehensive Introduction to the Religions of the World* (Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2009), Kindle edition, 618.

⁷⁹Stuart A. Wright, *Armageddon in Waco: Critical Perspectives on the Branch Davidian Conflict* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 46.

⁸⁰Wright, *Armageddon*, 48.

⁸¹Wright, *Armageddon*, 46.

⁸²Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 110.

Ben Roden formed the Branch Davidians in 1955 and moved onto the Mount Carmel property in 1962 following the dissolution of the Davidians. Roden believed that he was going to be installed as the Davidic King in Israel.⁸³ Following Ben Roden's death in 1978, his wife Louise took over leadership of the Branch Davidians.⁸⁴ Their son George was outraged because he felt that he was the true heir to the throne and the one who was to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem just as Solomon had after his father's death.⁸⁵ Infighting between the two continued in court and within the community, ultimately leading to George being expelled from Mount Carmel. During her tenure Louise declared that the Holy Spirit was female and God was both male and female. She further stated that in the second coming the Messiah would be female.⁸⁶

When Vernon Howell was a teenager he dreamed of being a rock star and even took guitar lessons for a short time.⁸⁷ When he was 18 years old, he began a relationship with a 16-year-old girl in Dallas, Texas. He was living with the girl's family at the time and when she became pregnant her father kicked him out of the house.⁸⁸ In 1979, Vernon Howell joined the SDA church in Tyler, Texas. Howell was "obsessed with sexual matters" and he claimed to have had a vision from God that he was to take the pastor's daughter as his wife. Howell continued to see her, in spite of being banned by the pastor, and she became pregnant twice resulting in miscarriages.⁸⁹ In 1981, he moved to Mount Carmel and began working as a handyman.⁹⁰ He continued to fellowship at both the SDA church in Tyler and Mount Carmel until 1983, when he was excommunicated from the SDA church for continuing to pursue the pastor's daughter.⁹¹ Howell changed his name to David Koresh in 1990 and eventually declared himself the Lamb of God

⁸³Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 136.

⁸⁴Beverley, *Nelson's*, 658.

⁸⁵Wright, *Armageddon*, 52.

⁸⁶Wright, *Armageddon*, 52.

⁸⁷Bonnie Haldeman and Catherine Wessinger, *Memories of the Branch Davidians: The Autobiography of David Koresh's Mother* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 19.

⁸⁸Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 174.

⁸⁹Beverley, *Nelson's*, 658.

⁹⁰Beverley, *Nelson's*, 655.

⁹¹Wright, *Armageddon*, 53.

from Rev 5.⁹² The name David Koresh has biblical significance; it reflected the Davidic kingship from the Old Testament and the last name Koresh was a Hebrew translation of the Emperor Cyrus.⁹³

In 1983, Louise Roden allied with Koresh to help with her struggle for leadership, and named him as her successor.⁹⁴ Koresh began the practice of taking spiritual wives in 1984 when he married 14-year-old Rachel Jones.⁹⁵ In 1985, George Roden was able to successfully organize an election for the presidency of the Branch Davidians, which he won. This was a major setback for Koresh because George forcibly removed him from Mount Carmel when he took over. Koresh moved to Palestine, Texas with some of his followers and later returned when George was arrested.⁹⁶

Koresh claimed 14-year-old Karen Doyle as his second wife in 1986 and was rumored to have slept with the 12-year-old sister of Rachel Jones.⁹⁷ Koresh eventually annulled all of the marriages of his followers and, instead, claimed sexual rights over all of the females, even the ones below the age of consent.⁹⁸ Next, he claimed to be “the male figure to create a new line of God’s children.”⁹⁹ In 1987, George Roden “dug up the corpse of Anna Hughes and challenged Howell to a “resurrection contest.” Howell declined and asked the Waco sheriff’s department to charge Roden with abuse of a corpse. A gun battle ensued when Howell and his men returned to the property to get a picture of the corpse.”¹⁰⁰ George Roden was incarcerated in 1988 for violating a

⁹²Beverley, *Nelson’s*, 675.

⁹³Martin Ballard, *End-timers: Three Thousand Years of Waiting for Judgment Day* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 202.

⁹⁴Wright, *Armageddon*, 53.

⁹⁵Beverley, *Nelson’s*, 660.

⁹⁶Wright, *Armageddon*, 53.

⁹⁷Beverley, *Nelson’s*, 652.

⁹⁸Ballard, *End-timers*, 202.

⁹⁹Beverley, *Nelson’s*, 687.

¹⁰⁰Beverley, *Nelson’s*, 632–634.

restraining order and filing legal forms and motions filled with profanity. This was the break that David Koresh needed to finally take physical control of Mount Carmel.¹⁰¹

4. Transition to Violence

The Branch Davidian traditions, similar to other Christian groups, have always believed that the current age would transition into the next age only through a violent end.¹⁰² Koresh developed a “consuming interest” in the Bible and guns through his involvement in the SDA movement.¹⁰³ Gun sale records showed that Koresh had purchased 223 weapons and parts to build an additional 100 AR-15 assault rifles from Hewitt Handguns.¹⁰⁴ Under the leadership of George Roden and David Koresh, the people of Mount Carmel utilized guns to prevent overthrow of their leadership, or expel one another from Mount Carmel. The Branch Davidians, had been “watching for the time when America would turn belligerent and align itself with Satan and his Church (Rome) in an effort to drive truth from the earth.”¹⁰⁵

Following reports of child abuse, a search warrant was issued on 23 February 1993 and federal agents from the BATF raided the Branch Davidian compound on February 28th.¹⁰⁶ From 28 February through 19 April the BATF made numerous attempts to reconcile and evacuate the compound. David Koresh agreed to leave the compound if his taped message was played. FBI negotiators persuaded him to say, “I, David Koresh, agree upon the broadcasting of this tape, to come out peacefully with all the people immediately.”¹⁰⁷ Following the playing of the tape on radio and CNN, he failed to keep his promise saying that, “God told him, in an audible voice: ‘Wait.’”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹Wright, *Armageddon*, 53.

¹⁰²Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 234.

¹⁰³Ballard, *End-timers*, 202.

¹⁰⁴Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 239.

¹⁰⁵ Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 235.

¹⁰⁶Beverley, *Nelson's*, 689–690.

¹⁰⁷Beverley, *Nelson's*, 753–754.

¹⁰⁸Beverley, *Nelson's*, 752.

5. Aftermath of Waco

Following the April 19 assault on the Branch Davidian compound, it erupted in flames and 81 people perished, including twenty-five children.¹⁰⁹ David Koresh was killed from a gunshot wound to the head. Fourteen adults and twenty-one children fled the compound during the siege and six members were not at the compound when the siege took place.¹¹⁰ There were seven Branch Davidians that received prison sentences due to involvement in the attack on the ATF officers.¹¹¹ These members were jailed for manslaughter, weapons charges, or both. The first six members were released from prison in 2006 and the final member was released from prison in 2007.¹¹² Following his release from jail, Clive Doyle became the caretaker of the Mount Carmel property. He does not claim any prophetic status, but is simply there to carry on the message of the Branch Davidians.¹¹³

6. Conclusion

The Branch Davidians were an apocalyptic group that was heavily armed and expected a violent end.¹¹⁴ This dramatic conclusion was perpetuated by their interpretation of the Book of Revelation. David Koresh was a charismatic leader who obtained an absolute authority over the group through his revelation as a prophet from God and his declaration as both the Lamb of God from Revelation 5 and the White Horseman from Revelation 19. The Branch Davidian concept of the remnant church gave them a sense of high commitment, they felt that all others would fall away and they would be the only ones left. This same remnant church concept was utilized in their teaching of the Catholic Church and Presbyterian Church falling away from the Church that God wanted. While there is a concept of returning to the Old Teachings that God

¹⁰⁹Stickney, *All-American Monster*, 1503–1504.

¹¹⁰Beverley, *Nelson's*, 693–695.

¹¹¹Beverley, *Nelson's*, 696–697.

¹¹² Associated Press, “Six Branch Davidians Due for Release 13 Years After Waco Inferno | Fox News.” Fox News. FOX News Network, 19 Apr. 2006. Web. 05 Sept. 2012.
<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,192341,00.html>.

¹¹³Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 332.

¹¹⁴Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 25.

wants, there are actually new revelations introduced by David Koresh including polygamy, dissolving marriages for his benefit, and having sex with children. The Mount Carmel compound provided an isolated environment for the community to spread the teachings, practice their beliefs, and do it all without the scrutiny of outside influences. It was not until someone defected from the group that the government had enough evidence to approve a search warrant. Finally, while people may see their actions as extreme, many of the Branch Davidians were well-educated individuals who knew what they believed, why they believed it, and could explain their belief to others.¹¹⁵

C. PEOPLE’S TEMPLE

1. Background

On November 18, 1978, 918 people either committed suicide or were killed in the South American country of Guyana, following the murderous attack on Congressman Leo Ryan and his entourage at a nearby airstrip.¹¹⁶ Their deaths occurred after a long isolationist NRM movement called “The People’s Temple” relocated to Jonestown, Guyana from the United States. The group’s leader, Jim Jones was among those killed that day. The dead included families and children.

Jim Jones began as a church pastor in the mid-1950s. His church morphed from a relatively traditional Pentecostal church into The People’s Temple, an interracial, socialistic endeavor. Jones drew followers through his apparent gifts of prophecy and healing which were accomplished with trickery and sleight of hand.¹¹⁷ He continued to attract followers who were interested in a socialist egalitarian life, which was a major focus of his church. Jim Jones led his followers with complete control and demanded full commitment from them. He ruled with violence and intimidation leading to the final acts of suicide and murder. The People’s Temple, led by its charismatic leader, utilized apocalyptic fears and socialistic views to garner a following that ultimately led to the deaths of over 900 people in French Guyana.

¹¹⁵ Newport, *The Branch Davidians*, 16.

¹¹⁶ Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 30.

¹¹⁷ Tim Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 46.

2. The Charismatic Leader

Jim Jones was an only child of a disabled World War I veteran and a hard-working mother who had little time for her son. As Lifton notes, Jones “felt deeply neglected as a child, recalling the absence of ‘any love, any understanding’ at home and the discomfort of school functions where ‘everybody’s fucking parent was there but mine.’”¹¹⁸ In search for a place to fit in, Jones began to attend church with his neighbor and then drifted from congregation to congregation. As a youth he began to preach to other kids, entertaining them with his “theatrical manner” and even performing last rites for dead animals.¹¹⁹ As Jones grew up, he in essence drew in his first follower, his wife Marceline, whom he met while working in a hospital. According to Tim Reiterman, who exhaustively studied Jim Jones and The People’s Temple and was shot on the fateful Congressional trip to Jonestown, “nothing could wound Jim Jones as much as abandonment, and at this stage of his life he needed no more than Marceline.”¹²⁰

Jim Jones formally entered the ministry in 1952. He was disenchanted with traditional churches because they were racially segregated, and he desired to have an integrated congregation. Racial integration was so important that Jim and Marceline started their own church and adopted children of other races. His efforts did not go unnoticed by the Indianapolis community. He was appointed to a local Human Rights Commission, “and he successfully integrated churches, restaurants, the telephone company, the police department, a theater, an amusement park, and the Methodist Hospital.”¹²¹ His ministry attracted large numbers of people to his healings sessions, who would then stay and hear his message. Reiterman notes that “religious people, with their eyes and minds on the heavens, and their hearts open, were more susceptible to a con job and sleight of hand than most people.”¹²²

¹¹⁸Robert Lifton, *Destroying the World*, 283.

¹¹⁹Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 19.

¹²⁰Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 42.

¹²¹Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 34.

¹²²Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 50.

As Jones' church congregation grew, his message added apocalyptic paranoia to his message. Wessinger notes that Jones read an article in *Esquire* that named Eureka, California, as one of the safest places to inhabit after a nuclear holocaust, and subsequently moved his operation from Indiana to Northern California.¹²³ Reiterman mentions, "A change of location would be an acid test. Removing his people from their Midwestern roots, having them sell their homes and quit their jobs, would make them more dependent, and thus more receptive to total commitment."¹²⁴

3. The People's People

Mary Maaga lists three types of followers who joined The People's Temple. They included the Indiana white members, who joined and became administrators of the church. The second group was the black members, the majority of the population, who benefited from the social message. The final group was the entrants to the religion who were members from California and they also bought into Jones' message of equality.¹²⁵

New membership to The People's Temple required total commitment and buy-in. To join The People's Temple, followers had to surrender everything in their lives. They gave their money, their homes, and their identities to Jim Jones. Followers were alienated from their families. Those who questioned Jones or waived in their commitment were ostracized from the group. Jones also had followers sign blank pieces of paper, and even had parents sign affidavits that they had abused their children.¹²⁶ Additionally, a number of men and women had sexual relations with Jones as a form of commitment and bonding with the charismatic leader.¹²⁷ These forms of commitment made it hard for members to fight back against perceived injustices or even to leave the NRM itself.

¹²³Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 34.

¹²⁴Reiterman, *Raven*, 94.

¹²⁵Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 35.

¹²⁶"Witness to Jonestown," (video documentary). Peacock Productions, *MSNBC Films*, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27052411/>.

¹²⁷Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 35.

4. Transition to Violence

Small acts of violence began to creep into The People's Temple. Punishment began with children but was soon practiced on anyone Jones deemed subversive. Initially this included corporal punishments and psychological torment. Jones then instituted boxing matches with children and shortly thereafter included adults. Winners of the matches would progressively meet tougher opponents until they were beaten. Reiterman notes, "Like so much with the church, the physical discipline began in a small way and only gradually reached extremes."¹²⁸ These acts taught members that fighting for the church was a winning endeavor and fighting against the church was a losing one. It was also during this time that Jones began to introduce the idea of mass suicide, one time serving the inner circle wine and then telling them it was poisoned.¹²⁹ Jones had begun to condition them to the idea of following his commands to the most extreme.

Reports of violence within the People's Temple began to leak as early as 1972.¹³⁰ While The People's Temple was residing in California, Jim Jones garnered a following in the local community that afforded him some protection from early reports. For example, Jim Jones had a rapport with the Democratic Party in San Francisco and helped a mayor get elected in 1975. He was subsequently appointed to the San Francisco housing authority.¹³¹ As some members of the NRM started to defect, reporter Marshall Kildoff began researching an article that would eventually be published in *New West Magazine* that highlighted the violence occurring within the People's Temple. As the article was nearing publication, Jones became paranoid and fled with his church to Guyana.¹³²

While the temple was preparing for the *New West* article to be published in August of 1977, Jones faced another battle. He was embroiled in a child custody dispute. The child in question was John Victor Stoen. His mother Grace had defected from the

¹²⁸Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 259.

¹²⁹"Witness to Jonestown," (video documentary). Peacock Productions, *MSNBC Films*, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27052411/>.

¹³⁰Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 327.

¹³¹Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 36.

¹³²Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 327.

church leaving the child behind with his legal father Tim Stoen, who then took the child to Guyana on orders from Jim Jones. Tim Stoen however had previously signed an affidavit claiming that Jones was the father.¹³³ According to Jones, he impregnated the mother as a control mechanism requested by Tim Stoen when she was debating leaving the church.¹³⁴ Numerous academics cite the impending custody battle over the child as being the catalyst behind the ultimate suicide/murder that would take place.

After the *New West* article was published, Jones moved the majority of his congregation to Jonestown, Guyana.¹³⁵ His paranoia, however, did not cease. Jones increasingly used narcotics, which may have exacerbated his paranoia.¹³⁶ Grace and Tim Stoen took legal action to try to get the child returned to the United States and this increasingly weighed on Jones's mind. Eventually, the Stoens would get the attention of Congressman Leo Ryan, along with other family members of the NRM who organized into a group called *The Concerned Relatives*, and he organized a trip to Jonestown to see what was happening.¹³⁷

As the congressional visit loomed, Jim Jones began preparation for what was to come. Jones' paranoia included staging attacks against him as a display towards others of the gravity of the situation.¹³⁸ He pre-ordered the cyanide solution and held more suicide drills that he called *White Nights*. Once the visitors arrived, Jones showed them around, and had them speak to members of the NRM that he could trust. It was during this visit where Jones's legitimacy came into question. A news reporter in the entourage was passed a note from a member who wanted to defect. This note was given to the congressman and then he brought it up to Jim Jones. Jones stated that anyone could leave of his or her own free will. More defectors began to come forward. The Congressman

¹³³Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 36.

¹³⁴James Reston Jr. and Noah Adams, "Father Cares: The Last of Jonestown, Part 1," (audio documentary, *National Public Radio*, 1981, RealAudio and Windows Media Player formats, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1509317>).

¹³⁵Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 40.

¹³⁶Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 426.

¹³⁷Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 40.

¹³⁸Wessinger, *How the Millennium*, 46.

attempted to take out around a dozen members. When the party got to the airport and began boarding the planes, it was then that Jones's soldiers drove onto the runway and attacked. Five members of the party were killed, including Leo Ryan, one defector, and three members of the press. Many more were injured.¹³⁹

Back in the Jonestown encampment, Jones prepared for the final *White Night*. He called everyone together and told them that Leo Ryan had been killed, and the only avenue for everyone was to end it on their terms, not in a jail cell in the United States. He claimed that the Guyanese army would be parachuting in to the settlement to torture and kill them. He called for his cyanide drink solution to be brought out and administered to the children first. Only one member spoke out against doing this and other members quickly quieted her. Some members did not want to take the solution so others injected them with it, as armed guards encircled the pavilion. Jim Jones and one other member were found shot and it is unknown who shot him.¹⁴⁰ Reiterman observes, "No one could stop him, not after he had manipulated his people into believing their fortunes lay only in a grandiose final statement, not after he had sealed their compact with the airstrip murders and the command: bring the children first."¹⁴¹

5. Conclusion

The tale of Jim Jones and The People's Temple is a tale of a charismatic leader in search of socialistic principles, who garnered a following of over 900 people and nearly all of them met a cataclysmic end. Jones's message of social and racial harmony struck a chord with white and black followers who wanted something different from society. Jones feared a coming nuclear holocaust and moved the church to locations he perceived to be safe. Jones ruled harshly, utilizing punishments and even sexual means to exert further control. As outside news organizations researched the NRM and published articles

¹³⁹"Witness to Jonestown," (video documentary). Peacock Productions, *MSNBC Films*, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27052411/>.

¹⁴⁰"Witness to Jonestown," (video documentary). Peacock Productions, *MSNBC Films*, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27052411/>.

¹⁴¹Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 572.

about the abuses of Jim Jones, he became increasingly paranoid. He socially conditioned his followers to what he termed “revolutionary suicide,” which was the only way out of their desperate situation.¹⁴²

A visit from a U.S. congressman and his entourage turned violent when a few of the followers from Jonestown attempted to defect. Jones proclaimed that the enemy was coming to jail everyone and he ordered the mass suicide that took place. Members that did not want to kill themselves were murdered. Many authors cite the perceived conflict with the Congressional delegation and other governmental forces as the primary source of the suicide, but Jones’s empire was crumbling around him. His dreams of his socialistic community that he ruled over were coming to an end and that may have precipitated the final act. Reiterman best concludes, “His [Jim Jones] ends-justify-the-means philosophy, paranoia, megalomania and charismatic personality must weigh much more heavily in the balance than any oversight, ineptitude, weakness or political exploitation by those outside the church. It was not the Temple’s enemies that brought down the Temple, but Jones’s destructive personality. The prophecy of doom had become an end in itself.”¹⁴³

D. SCIENTOLOGY

1. Introduction

The term Scientology means, “the study of truth” and according to its leaders, it is the “fastest-growing religion in the world.”¹⁴⁴ Since its creation in 1954, the Church of Scientology has expanded to 165 different countries, with 8,500 Scientology churches, missions, and outreach groups claiming millions of members worldwide.¹⁴⁵ The movement is based on the teachings of L. Ron Hubbard, a former naval intelligence officer, author, sailor, explorer, and screenwriter.¹⁴⁶ The organizational structure of the

¹⁴²Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 561.

¹⁴³Reiterman with John Jacobs, *Raven*, 577.

¹⁴⁴Janet Reitman, *Inside Scientology: The Story of America’s Most Secretive Religion* (Boston, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), Kindle edition, 117.

¹⁴⁵ Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 117.

¹⁴⁶J. Gordon Melton, *The Church of Scientology* (Salt Lake City, UT: Signature Books in cooperation with CESNUR, 2000), 1–12.

church has evolved through the years from decentralized “Dianetics” small groups to a structure with a large centralized staff, based in California, which sends workers out to Scientology Churches to ensure standardization among the churches. Since the 1950s, this new religion has had numerous conflicts with the FBI, FDA, and IRS, regarding its status as a religious organization and its involvement in some alleged criminal activity.¹⁴⁷

2. Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard

In 1950 L. Ron Hubbard authored *Dianetics*, which claimed to be a “revolutionary new science of the mind.”¹⁴⁸ He was born in 1911 into the family of a United States naval officer. His first instruction on the inner workings of the human mind came when he was 12 years old, by U.S. Navy commander Joseph “Snake” Thompson.¹⁴⁹ Thompson was a student of Sigmund Freud and his instruction inspired Hubbard to continue on his own independent explorations of the mind.¹⁵⁰ In the fall of 1930 he enrolled in George Washington University (GWU) and majored in civil engineering.¹⁵¹ While at GWU, he joined the flying club and became an accomplished pilot. During this time he also sold his first piece, a nonfiction article called, “Tailwind Willies.”¹⁵² Hubbard turned out numerous stories using various pen names, including Winchester Remington Colt, Bernard Hubble, René Lafayette, Scott Morgan, Kurt von Rachen, and John Seabrook.¹⁵³ In the mid-1930s Hubbard moved to Hollywood to work for Columbia Pictures on the script for *The Secret of Treasure Island*, the adaption of his second novel.¹⁵⁴ He continued with Columbia Pictures working on *The Mysterious Pilot*, *The Adventures of Wild Bill Hickok*, and *The Spider Returns*.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷Hugh B. Urban, *The Church of Scientology: a history of a new religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1.

¹⁴⁸Urban, *The Church of Scientology*, 3.

¹⁴⁹Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 2.

¹⁵⁰Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 2.

¹⁵¹Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 290.

¹⁵²Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 3.

¹⁵³Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 4.

¹⁵⁴Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 341.

¹⁵⁵Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 4.

Hubbard was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade in the U.S. Naval Reserve and, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, was called to active duty and sent to the Philippines.¹⁵⁶ While on active duty, he became involved in the Ordo Templi Orientis (OTO), a ritual magic group that used sex to “raise magical energies.”¹⁵⁷ Hubbard denied any connection with OTO and claimed that his contact with the group was in relation to his work as a naval intelligence officer.¹⁵⁸

3. Background of Dianetics

Following World War II, Hubbard focused on research that attempted to pinpoint a technology of the human mind. In 1948 he synthesized his findings in *The Original Thesis*, a privately circulated manuscript that included his basic conclusions about human aberrations and the practice for removing them called auditing.¹⁵⁹ In an auditing session, a person is led through a series of commands to call up details of a recent aberration, or traumatic event. With each request an event further back is remembered eventually leading to what Hubbard calls the “basic-basic,” or prenatal incident.¹⁶⁰ The person is then asked to relive re-experience the event until the impact is neutralized. The favorable response to this initial book led to publication of *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*. In this book, Hubbard breaks down the human mind into two sections, the analytical mind and the reactive mind.¹⁶¹ The analytical mind is the conscious mind that makes the day-to-day decisions. The reactive mind tends to undermine the work of the analytical mind by “promulgating system glitches, or ‘aberrations,’ which manifest as fear, inhibition, intense love and hate, and also various psychosomatic ills.”¹⁶² The reactive mind does not operate independently and it lies dormant until awakened by a

¹⁵⁶Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 5.

¹⁵⁷Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 7.

¹⁵⁸ It is important to note that the practices of the Church of Scientology do not show any influence by OTO. Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 8.

¹⁵⁹Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 8.

¹⁶⁰Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 604.

¹⁶¹Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 602.

¹⁶²Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 602.

jarring event such as pain, unconsciousness, trauma, or birth. These events are stored in one's mind as scars, which Hubbard calls engrams.¹⁶³

As the movement grew, Hubbard began to concentrate on teaching people how to audit and he introduced two new books: *Science of Survival* and *Self-Analysis* in 1951, which helped with that process.¹⁶⁴ In 1951, the greatest gain in *Dianetics* occurred when Volney Matheson developed the E-meter based upon the designs of Hubbard. This instrument claims to measure the emotional reaction to a small electrical current, operating like a lie detector. It allowed for trained auditors to quantify the counseling experience of a pre-Clear, someone who has not been audited.¹⁶⁵ This new device would be utilized in *Scientology*.¹⁶⁶

4. The Emergence of Scientology

Hubbard declared that Scientology allowed its practitioners the ability to discover the anatomy of the human soul, known as the thetan, which represented a person's true self. The thetan was separate from the body, the mind, and the physical world and existed before the beginning of time. In his argument, Hubbard theorized that thetans utilized and discarded physical bodies and actually created the universe we now live in out of boredom.¹⁶⁷ Throughout their existence, thetans were implanted with ideas that caused them to believe they were no more than the bodies they inhabited; this belief caused them to lose their original powers.¹⁶⁸

The goal of Scientology is to help people reach the condition known as "clear" where they are free from any of the psychological or spiritual malfunctions.¹⁶⁹ Early lessons in Scientology teach that there are "eight dynamics of existence, starting with

¹⁶³Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 602.

¹⁶⁴Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 9.

¹⁶⁵Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 10.

¹⁶⁶Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 828.

¹⁶⁷Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 836.

¹⁶⁸Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 841.

¹⁶⁹Ronald B. Flowers, *That Godless Court?: Supreme Court Decisions on Church-State Relationships* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 149.

your relationship with yourself, and then progressing to your relationship with your family, social group, society, plants, animals, the larger physical world, and ultimately, with the Supreme Being, however you chose to define that.”¹⁷⁰

There are two basic services that the Church of Scientology offers individuals, auditing and training. While auditing is the process of cleansing a person, training is the process of teaching someone how to audit. Unlike a traditional Christian Church that relies on a voluntary offering, Scientology charges set fees for auditing and training.¹⁷¹ These fees are on a graduated scale where, as the level of auditing/training increases, so does the cost.¹⁷² This “doctrine of exchange,” in which receiving something requires payment in some form, is a central idea in Scientology.¹⁷³

5. The Organization of the Church

In 1954, students of Dianetics and Scientology already acknowledged that Scientology functioned for them as a religion.¹⁷⁴ In 1955, Hubbard assumed the duties of Executive Director of the founding Church of Scientology in Washington, D.C., He began to develop an organizational structure and formed a distribution center to oversee the publication and dissemination of church literature.¹⁷⁵ By the late 1950s, Scientology expanded to South Africa, France, and England. With the growth of the church, attacks on Scientology increased in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.¹⁷⁶

In 1966, Hubbard established the Guardian’s Office whose job was to “enforce church policy and ‘safeguard Scientology orgs [sic], Scientologists, and Scientology.’”¹⁷⁷ The office handled legal and public relations obstacles to the church’s growth.¹⁷⁸ With

¹⁷⁰Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 1418.

¹⁷¹Flowers, *That Godless Court?*, 149.

¹⁷²Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 59.

¹⁷³Flowers, *That Godless Court?*, 149.

¹⁷⁴Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 11.

¹⁷⁵Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 12.

¹⁷⁶Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 14–15.

¹⁷⁷Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 1547.

¹⁷⁸Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 16.

his writings attaining the status of scripture, Hubbard retained his copyrights, resigned all of his official administrative positions, took on the title of “founder,” and continued to write and develop Scientology while collecting royalties.¹⁷⁹ In 1967, a new church unit known as the Sea Org was established on three ships in order to promote a more advanced level of Scientology training. The members of the new unit were selected from the most dedicated church members and remained on the ships until 1975, when operations moved to the new land-based establishment in Clearwater, Florida.¹⁸⁰

In the 1970s, the Guardians took an activist stance and began collecting propaganda to use against those that opposed the church. Unbeknownst to the church leaders and members, these Guardians began to see themselves as above the law and a majority of the accusations persisting against the church are in reference to actions taken by the Guardian Office in the 1970s.¹⁸¹ As a result of the Guardians’ actions, in 1977 the FBI raided the Washington, D.C., church and confiscated 48,000 documents, indicting eleven officials including Hubbard’s wife.¹⁸² This incident led to a major international restructuring and the Sea Org disbanded the Guardian Office.¹⁸³

6. Changes in the Organization

Following the disbanding of the Guardian Office two new corporate entities were created, the Religious Technology Center and the Churches of Scientology International.¹⁸⁴ The individual churches of Scientology were realigned under a new “mother church structure” with the Churches of Scientology International acting as the lead church.¹⁸⁵ Its purpose was to monitor the expansion of Scientology around the world and guide local churches in applying teachings. It also assumed many duties that were previously accomplished by the Guardians Office, including public relations and legal

¹⁷⁹James R. Lewis, *Scientology* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 25.

¹⁸⁰Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 17.

¹⁸¹Lewis, *Scientology*, 25.

¹⁸²Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 20.

¹⁸³Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 21.

¹⁸⁴Lewis, *Scientology*, 28.

¹⁸⁵Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 41.

matters.¹⁸⁶ The Religious Technology Center is the “ultimate ecclesiastical authority regarding the standard and pure application of L. Ron Hubbard’s religious technologies.”¹⁸⁷ The center was also given all of the trademarks and service marks for Scientology by Hubbard.¹⁸⁸

In 1955, L. Ron Hubbard launched Project Celebrity, a program that aimed at converting leaders in the arts, sports, management, and government with the hope they would spread church doctrine.¹⁸⁹ The Hollywood celebrities not only found Dianetics training helpful but they enjoyed the nurturing that Scientology offers to celebrities.¹⁹⁰ One special perk for celebrities, and their family members, is the special access to Celebrity Centers, a place where the famous can work on their spiritual development in peace.¹⁹¹

The highest level of training for Scientology is located at the Flag Ship Service Organization that is currently located onboard a 450ft ship called *Freewinds*.¹⁹² The primary management group in the church is known as Sea Org and members of this organization sign a billion year contract.¹⁹³ The children of Sea Org members live apart from their parents and have their own organization called Cadet Org.¹⁹⁴

7. Controversy with Scientology

In his *Time* magazine article, “The Scientologist and Me,” Richard Behar says, “Strange things happen to people who write about Scientology.”¹⁹⁵ His comment is in reference to the Scientology plot called “Operation Freak-Out,” in which church

¹⁸⁶Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 22.

¹⁸⁷Urban, *The Church of Scientology*, 182.

¹⁸⁸Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 22.

¹⁸⁹Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 4143.

¹⁹⁰Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 42.

¹⁹¹Lewis, *Scientology*, 397.

¹⁹²Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 41.

¹⁹³Lewis, *Scientology*, 99.

¹⁹⁴Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 5118.

¹⁹⁵ Richard Behar, “The Scientologists and Me,” *Time*, May 6, 1991, accessed September 9, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,972886,00.html>.

members attempted to get the journalist Paulette Cooper institutionalized, or jailed, after she wrote a book in 1971 that was critical of the religion.¹⁹⁶ While this particular event was under the old Guardian Office leadership, the church has earned a reputation for harassing former church insiders and squelching critics through litigation.¹⁹⁷

Another controversial practice in the church is the Rehabilitation Project Force. In one case in 1999 a member of Sea Org was sentenced to an “indefinite period of reeducation on the Rehabilitation Project Force, which was located in a remote camp at the edge of the base known as Happy Valley.”¹⁹⁸ This rehabilitation program is designed for those members who have become unproductive or strayed from the church’s code.¹⁹⁹

8. Conclusion

While Scientology originated from the writings of L. Ron Hubbard, an author who studied what he calls the science of the mind, it did not enter the “field of religion” until Hubbard addressed humanity’s place in the cosmos.²⁰⁰ In fact, in the beginning it was a decentralized group of Dianetics followers who practiced the process of auditing one another. In 1954 people began to acknowledge it as their religion and Hubbard took an official leadership role in 1955.

Over the years this secretive religion has seen its share of controversy and reorganization. First, a long battle with the IRS ensued to gain tax-exempt status for the church. Next, secret organizations such as the Guardian Office broke laws leading to an FBI raid, jail time for its members, and a reorganization of the church. Currently, Scientology functions as a highly organized New Religious Movement that believes the human soul has been in existence since the beginning of time. Intertwined in this belief system is the belief that people can free their souls, or thetan, from traumatic events through the process of auditing.

¹⁹⁶ Richard Behar, “The Scientologists and Me.”

¹⁹⁷ Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 198.

¹⁹⁸ Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 5385.

¹⁹⁹ Reitman, *Inside Scientology*, 5385.

²⁰⁰ Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 11.

While there are negative stories connected to Scientology, such as Operation Freak Out and the rehabilitation center at Happy Valley, very few of the negative stories have been corroborated. Finally, the church continues to receive positive press from several Hollywood celebrities including Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kelly Preston, and Kirstie Alley.²⁰¹

E. CONCLUSION

Aum Shinrikyo, Branch Davidians, People's Temple, and the Church of Scientology are four NRMs that span the spectrum of violence. They range from violence towards others to no violence. Aum Shinrikyo attempted to bring about the apocalypse. The Branch Davidians were preparing for end times and died in confrontation with the state. The People's Temple attempted to live communally in South America and killed some people, but primarily committed suicide while fearing for their way of life. The Church of Scientology has not exhibited signs of violence, but displays many of the markers of violence from Chapter I. These NRMs will now be graded to develop a baseline model for other NRMs to be analyzed against.

²⁰¹ Urban, *The Church of Scientology*, 41.

III. METHOD OF RESEARCH

A. SCORING METHODOLOGY

The scoring of each marker of a New Religious Movement included in the database is the biggest limitation of this study, as it is subjective. For each marker, a value between 0–5 was assigned. The value is based upon a comparison of the four primary studied NRMs. A value of zero means that this marker is not a characteristic of this NRM. A value of 5 indicates that, compared to the others, it does and is relatively strong. The methodology behind why each value was selected is discussed below in terms of the four NRMs discussed in the case studies of the previous chapter. This same methodology is then applied to all of the NRMs included in the database and summarized in the Appendix.

1. Charismatic Leadership

From Section I, we graded charismatic leadership based upon their grandiosity and paranoid tendencies. The more the leader was focused on themselves versus some other message the higher score they received. The leaders Shoko Asahara, Jim Jones, David Koresh all rate a 5 on the scale. Comparatively, L. Ron Hubbard is a 2. The first three are assigned a value of 5 because they were the sole figureheads of the movement, and their increasing paranoia eventually led to their demise. Hubbard's ranking is based on the fact that the Scientology movement is based upon Hubbard's writings and continued after he stepped aside.

2. Absolute Leader Authority

Shoko Asahara, Jim Jones, and David Koresh were all rated a 5 for absolute leader authority. In each of these three movements, the leaders considered themselves to be above the law and no one else in the organization had their capabilities. Hubbard, by contrast, first wrote his philosophy and others later built upon it. Therefore, his absolute

authority is coded as a 2. To be sure, there were times when individual Scientology groups stepped outside of local laws, but when discovered, they were disbanded by church leadership.

3. Supernaturalism

Nearly all religions contain some form of supernaturalism, however some of them considered themselves as supernatural versus belief in a supernatural being. The more a group perceived themselves as supernatural, the higher score they received. Aum Shinrikyo taught that members were superior and would be saved from the apocalypse if they were in good standing. It, therefore, was ranked a 5. The People's Temple did not preach as a group that they were supernatural, only Jim Jones himself eventually declared himself a god, and are therefore assigned a ranking of 4. With regards to the Branch Davidians, David Koresh saw himself as a figure from the book of Revelations as well as a prophet, and the group worshipped in this manner, garnering them a ranking of 5. Scientology began as a self-help teaching and later introduced supernaturalism through the discovery of the thetan, "the spiritual essence of human beings, and the acceptance of past lives."²⁰² Therefore, it is assigned a rank of 3 for supernaturalism.

4. Apocalyptic Teachings

The book of Revelation from the bible along with other books talk of end times and the second coming and this is a mainstream ideology. Where this scoring methodology differs is that some groups preach that the day is coming soon and they take drastic measures to prepare for or start it. As groups more focused on the apocalypse, they received a higher score. Aum Shinrikyo, People's Temple, and the Branch Davidians all took fairly drastic measures to protect them, or try to bring on the apocalypse; as such, they are assigned a value of 5. There is no mention of the apocalypse in Scientology, yielding a 0 for this marker.

²⁰² Melton, *The Church of Scientology*, 56.

5. Strict rule of Law/High Commitment

Aum Shinrikyo, People's Temple, and the Branch Davidians all required a full commitment from followers that included possessions, money, and even moving to special communes. As commitment levels become higher, groups tend to have more influence over their members. The higher the commitment levels, the higher score they received. The Branch Davidians even nullified marriages and pledged their wives to the leader. They all are assigned a value of 5. Scientology allows for members to continue in their normal lives at basic levels; however, the higher one wants to go in the organization requires more commitment, both monetarily and time/lives, garnering them a 3.

6. Isolationism

Isolationism is similar to high commitment, however the more a group is removed from local society the more they can be manipulated from the social norms. Aum Shinrikyo, People's Temple, and the Branch Davidians all required members to live on special communes and limited followers exposure to the outside world. This earns them a ranking of 5 as compared to Scientology, which is assigned a ranking of 3. Scientology is more like conventional churches with branches all over the world where followers may come and go. There are some aspects of isolationism including large cruise ships for very specific high-level teaching, and the group is very private.

7. Group Fragility

Group fragility is the tendency for members of the NRM to split up or leave from the organization for various reasons. Aum Shinrikyo and People's Temple both earn a score of 5 for group fragility. Asahara's prophecies failed to come to light, and both groups had members starting to leave the organization feeling disenchanting. The Branch Davidians were assigned a score of 4 because some members left the group because of some of Koresh's more extreme teachings, such as his underage sexual policies. Scientology is assigned a score of 0 as the group seems to let members come and go. Some members leave and talk negatively about the organization, but this talk does not threaten the group as a whole.

8. Repression from State/Politics

As groups feel they are oppressed from local authorities they may tend to lash out violently to preserve their way of life. Some groups settle and even give concessions towards authorities, whereas others do not. This score was based upon how much the state or local populace interfered with the group. Aum Shinrikyo, People's Temple, and the Branch Davidians are all given a score a 2 for this characteristic. Early on in the movements the groups followed the laws of the state and it was not until they started to break laws that problems arose. They all operated amongst the local laws with religious status. When Scientology declared itself a religion, it received scrutiny from both the FBI and the FDA. The FBI raided church offices and seized thousands of documents to build a case against the tax-exempt status of the church. The FDA was concerned with the utilization of the E-Machine. As such, Scientology is assigned a 4 for this marker.

9. Dramatic Denouements

Dramatic denouements are when a NRM feels that the outside pressure or its internal paranoia have come to a climax and something must give, so they act out violently in some form. Although hard to predict, this fight-or-flight element was very prevalent in Aum Shinrikyo, People's Temple, and the Branch Davidians. They all believed the apocalypse was coming, which when combined with their conflict with authorities, contributed to their dramatic ending. These teachings and altercations garner them a 5 for this marker. Scientology however, seems to operate within state laws and does not perceive that they are in a fight-or-flight situation. This lack of a fight-or-flight teaching gives them a 0.

10. New Religion or New Teachings

This marker taken alone does not mean that violence will occur, it is simply a measure of how much of a NRM's teachings are based upon old teachings or if they have created something completely new, and different from the socially accepted mainstream. Aum Shinrikyo combined teachings from many religions, but ultimately its leader transformed all of these into his own teachings and declared himself a god, earning them a ranking of 4. The People's Temple is scored a 2 based upon their social communal

living and because only near the end did Jim Jones declare himself to be a god. The Branch Davidians built upon a pre-existing religion but introduced new elements into this teaching, giving them a score of 2 on the scale. While the founder of Scientology did include some aspects of other religious movements, the entire movement is based upon Hubbard's philosophical writings. As such, this earns them a rating of 5.

B. OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

This study centers on determining if violent New Religious Movements share certain attributes, that when compared to other NRMs, highlight their propensity for violence. In this chapter, we will analyze the data to see if any clustering patterns emerge. In particular, we are interested in determining whether violent religious groups cluster according to shared attributes, and if so, what are the more prominent attributes? Using the database constructed from The University of Virginia and Virginia Commonwealth University, each NRM was scored compared to the primary four case studies.

We begin by analyzing the data using social network analysis (SNA) related techniques, which will help identify clusters in the data.²⁰³ Detected patterns can then be useful for comparing violent and nonviolent NRMs to see if certain trigger points exist, and whether these could help authorities assess if they have a NRM that deserves more attention. As part of our analysis we consider several questions to answer the main research question: What is the network's overall structure? Do NRMs of the same violence level cluster together? If so, what are the attributes that those NRMs are linked to? Are there attributes that are more central to the violent NRMs? If so, is it feasible to remove or isolate the attribute from the NRM? Could there be any second-order effects in pursuing such a policy; for example, will it cause the NRM to be pushed to violence?

²⁰³ The data will be analyzed using the social network analysis software UCINET, NetDraw, Organization Risk Analyzer (ORA) and use similarity correlation analysis and visualization methods (e.g., multidimensional scaling, spring-embedding) to analyze and interpret the religious cult data. A description of these systems can be found at: Borgatti, Stephen P., *NetDraw 2.0* (Harvard, MA: Analytical Technologies) 2002–2005. Carley, Kathleen M, *Organizational Risk Analyzer (ORA)* (Pittsburgh, PA: Center for Computational Analysis of Social and Organizational Systems (CASOS): (Carnegie Mellon University, 2011). Borgatti, Stephen P., Martin G. Everett, and Linton C. Freeman, *UCINET for Windows: Software for Social Network Analysis* (Lexington, KY: Analytical Technologies), 2011.

1. Network Analysis in NETDRAW

The analysis begins with a visualization of the network using multidimensional scaling (Figure 1). In the graph (i.e., sociogram), nonviolent groups are colored light blue, the violent groups are colored red, and the attributes are colored dark blue. Moreover, the size of each attribute's node indicates the level to which the NRMs included in our analysis share that attribute; in other words, the larger the node, the more common it is for NRMs to share that attribute at a high level.²⁰⁴ For instance, the attributes, new religion and charismatic leadership are the largest nodes, which indicate that many of the NRMs score high on this attribute. A key aspect of the graph is that the violent NRMs are more closely tied to the attributes located on the right side of the graph (e.g., strict rule of law, isolationism), which suggests that these attributes are more associated with violent NRMs than they are with nonviolent NRMs. On the contrary, the attributes, charismatic leadership and new religion are located to the left of the graph and between both violent and nonviolent groups, indicating that both types of groups share these characteristics and thus are probably not “determinants” of violence.

²⁰⁴ Similarity correlations were estimated in ORA using a NRM by attribute matrix.

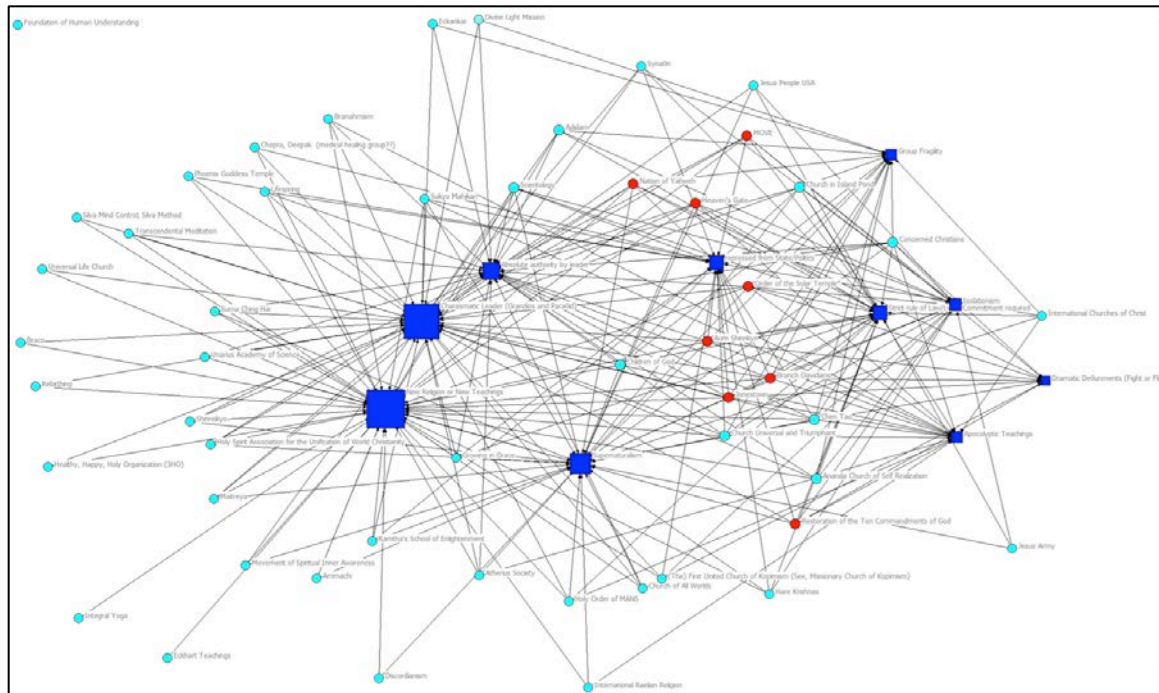


Figure 1. Netdraw Network showing the NRM and the attributes. The distance from the NRM from the attributes denotes the score for that attribute. The red NRM are violent. The larger the attribute square shows that more NRM share this attribute with higher scores.

2. Similarity Correlation In ORA

Some clustering of the violent NRM is evident in the figure, but further analysis is warranted to help distinguish violent from nonviolent groups. This is accomplished by estimating the level of similarity between the NRM used in this analysis.²⁰⁵ If violent groups share characteristics that they do not have with nonviolent groups, they should display a higher level of similarity with one another than they do with nonviolent NRM. Figure 2 displays an example of the network in tabular form, with each NRM in the far left column and the attributes across the top row. If the attribute column for a particular NRM has a value greater than 0, it possesses that attribute to some degree; if it has a value of 0, it does not.

²⁰⁵ Similarity correlations were estimated in ORA using a NRM by attribute matrix.

	Charismatic Leader	Absolute Authority	Supernaturalism	Apocalyptic Teachings	Strict rule of Law/High ...	Isolationism
Aum Shinr...	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Branch Da...	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Jonestown	5.0	5.0	4.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Scientology	2.0	1.0	3.0	0.0	3.0	2.0
Adidam	2.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	4.0
Ananda C...	2.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	4.0
Atherius S...	2.0	1.0	5.0	2.0	0.0	0.0
Ammachi	4.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Branahmi...	1.0	1.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	0.0
Braco	5.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Chen Tao	5.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	2.0	1.0
Children o...	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	3.0	0.0
Chopra, D...	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Church in ...	2.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	5.0	2.0
Church U...	2.0	1.0	3.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Concerne...	3.0	2.0	4.0	5.0	4.0	2.0
Church of ...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Discordia...	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Divine Lig...	4.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Eckankar	1.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Eckhart Te...	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 2. Sample of the initial imported “NRM by Attribute” network.

Based upon the scored attributes from Figure 2 and the Appendix, ORA’s similarity correlation function compares the attributes of each NRM to the attributes of every other NRM and creates a new NRM by NRM matrix where the value in each cell indicates the level of similarity between two NRMs. Figure 3 shows an example of what this network looks like in table form. The closer the values are to 1.00, the more similar the two NRMs are, and the closer they are to 0.00, the less similar they are. Looking at Figure 3 one can see that in this initial similarity correlation Aum Shinrikyo, the Branch Davidians, and Jonestown Temple share a similarity of 1.00 with one another, but only a 0.70 level of similarity with Scientology.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ The similarity correlation between two NRMs is based solely on the presence or absence of an attribute, not on the value of the attribute assigned during the coding process. This treatment of value data as binary is adjusted for below. See Section D.

	Aum Shinrikyo	Branch Davidians	Jonestown	Scientology	Adidam	Ananda Church of S...
Aum Shinr...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.699999988079071	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579
Branch Da...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.699999988079071	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579
Jonestown	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.699999988079071	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579
Scientology	0.699999988079071	0.699999988079071	0.699999988079071	1.0	0.625	0.625
Adidam	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579	0.625	1.0	1.0
Ananda C...	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579	0.625	1.0	1.0
Atherius S...	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.375	0.375
Ammachi	0.30000001192092896	0.30000001192092...	0.30000001192092896	0.4285714328289032	0.2857142984867096	0.2857142984867096
Branahmi...	0.4000000059604645	0.4000000059604645	0.4000000059604645	0.375	0.4285714328289032	0.4285714328289032
Braco	0.20000000298023224	0.20000000298023...	0.20000000298023224	0.2857142984867096	0.3333333432674408	0.3333333432674408
Chen Tao	0.8999999761581421	0.8999999761581421	0.8999999761581421	0.7777777910232544	0.66666666865348816	0.66666666865348816
Children o...	0.800000011920929	0.800000011920929	0.800000011920929	0.66666666865348816	0.5555555820465088	0.5555555820465088
Chopra, D...	0.30000001192092896	0.30000001192092...	0.30000001192092896	0.4285714328289032	0.2857142984867096	0.2857142984867096
Church in ...	0.800000011920929	0.800000011920929	0.800000011920929	0.66666666865348816	0.5555555820465088	0.5555555820465088
Church U...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.699999988079071	0.6000000238418579	0.6000000238418579
Concerne...	0.8999999761581421	0.8999999761581421	0.8999999761581421	0.6000000238418579	0.5	0.5
Church of ...	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.375	0.375
Discordia...	0.20000000298023224	0.20000000298023...	0.20000000298023224	0.2857142984867096	0.1428571492433548	0.1428571492433548
Divine Lig...	0.30000001192092896	0.30000001192092...	0.30000001192092896	0.25	0.5	0.5
Eckankar	0.30000001192092896	0.30000001192092...	0.30000001192092896	0.25	0.5	0.5

Figure 3. Sample of ORA Similarity Correlation of NRM by NRM

The data in Figure 3 can be visualized as sociogram nodes and lines where the nodes represent NRMs and the lines the level of similarity between two NRMs (Figures 4 and 5). In both figures, green nodes are nonviolent groups and red nodes are violent groups. In ORA the user can set a threshold value for the ties, only ties greater than a certain level of similarity are displayed. In other words, a threshold of 0.50 would display ties between NRMs that share a level of similarity of 50% or higher. Figure 4 displays the similarity NRM network with the SC set to 0.10, meaning that in order for two NRMs to be connected by a tie, they have to be at least 10% similar in terms of shared attributes. As one can see, nearly all of the NRMs are at least 10% similar with all other NRMs in the dataset. Figure 5 displays the same network, except that the threshold is set at 0.90, meaning that in order for two NRMs to be connected by a tie, they have to be at least 90% similar in terms of shared attributes. Not surprisingly, this network graph displays far fewer connections between NRMs. In fact, it is quite sparse. After examining several different threshold values, ties set at 0.750 (i.e., 75% similarity) and above capture some interesting clustering as illustrated in Figures 6 and 7. All eight of the violent NRMs and seven nonviolent NRMs are clustered together, suggesting that the similarity in their attributes places them in the “club” where historically 53% of the NRMs have been violent.

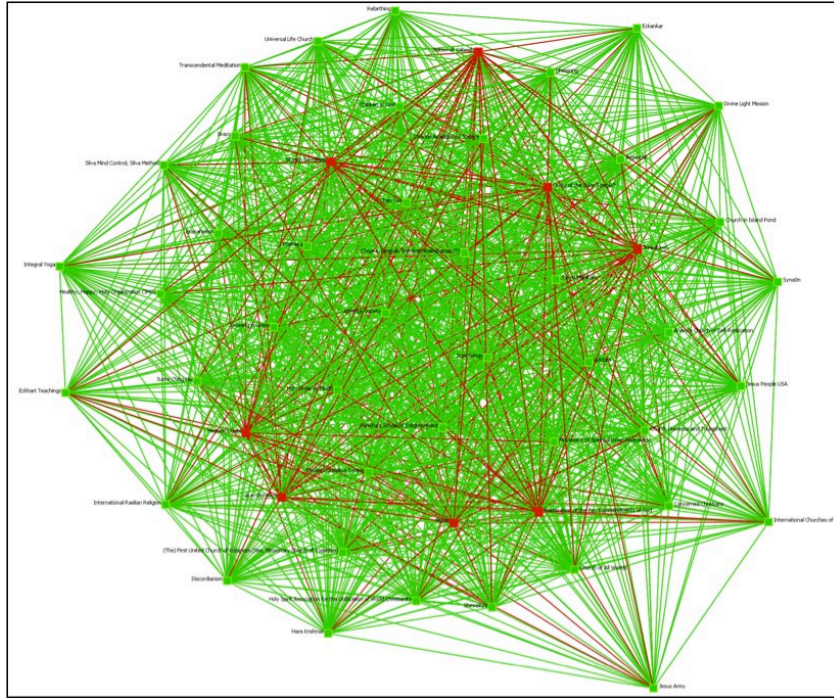


Figure 4. ORA depiction of NRM by NRM Network with threshold value of 0.10. Violent NRMs are depicted in red.

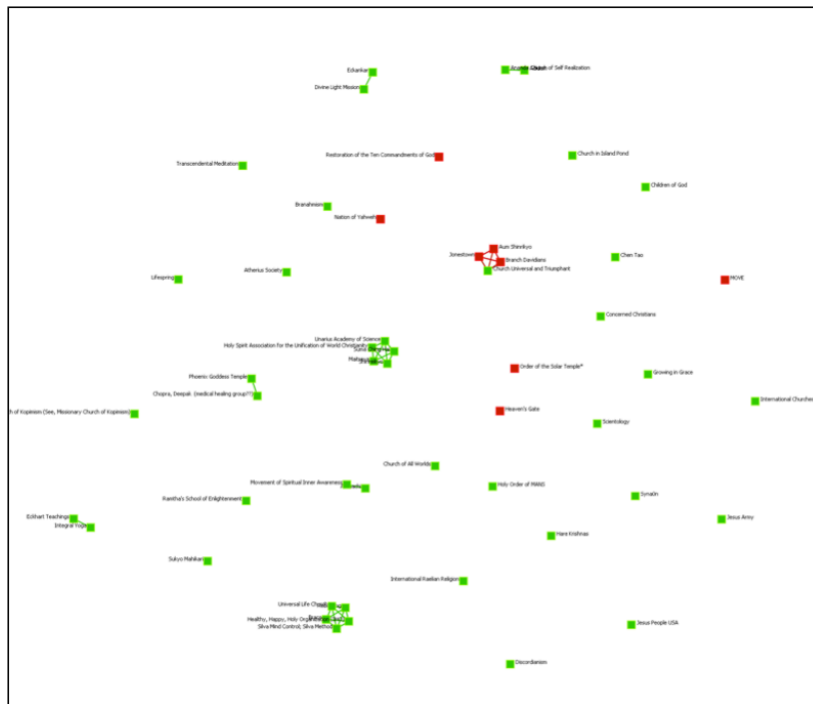


Figure 5. ORA depiction of NRM by NRM Network with a threshold value of 0.90. Violent NRMs are depicted in red.

3. Similarity Correlation of the Dichotomized Network

Recall that in the scoring of NRMs, a value of 0 indicated that no element of the attribute was present, a value of 1 indicated that the element was present but resided in the background and did not drive the NRM's actions or teachings, and as the values increased from two to five, they indicated that the attribute was more pronounced for that NRM. However, ORA's similarity correlation function does not take into account the weighted attribute values, but instead treats them as binary and only assesses whether two NRMs share an attribute when computing a similarity correlation. For instance, although Aum Shinrikyo received a score of 5.0 for apocalyptic teaching and the International Churches of Christ received a score of 1.0, ORA treats this as an instance of complete similarity. Since there are a total of ten attributes, setting a threshold value of 0.50 would identify ties between two NRMs that had a value of 1.0 or greater on five of the ten attributes, regardless what their assigned scores are on those five attributes. In other words, for this method, ORA simplified the data from a 0–5 scale to ones and zeros where a score of 2 or above received a value of 1 and a score below two received a zero prior to conducting the similarity correlation.

A more accurate means for determining the level of similarity between NRMs is for the analyst to determine at what point to dichotomize the data rather than have ORA perform this task. This is what is done in Figures 8 through 10. The original data were dichotomized such that attribute scores of two through five was assigned a value of 1.00, and scores of zero and one were assigned a value of 0.00.²⁰⁷ The effect of this is to remove less extreme attribute ties in the network. Figure 8 displays a portion of the similarity correlation matrix.

²⁰⁷ Analyses of similarity correlations using matrices dichotomized at scored values of 3, 4, and 5 were also completed and produced similar results. Nevertheless, a cutoff value of 2 seemed to be the most representative of the scoring methodology. Results of these other analyses are available upon request.

	Aum Shinr...	Branch Da...	Jonestown	Scientology	Adidam	Ananda C...	Atherius S...	Ammachi	Branahmi...	Braco
Aum Shinr...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.300000...	0.400000...	0.200000...	0.100000...	0.200000...
Branch Da...	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.300000...	0.400000...	0.200000...	0.100000...	0.200000...
Jonestown	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.300000...	0.400000...	0.200000...	0.100000...	0.200000...
Scientology	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.600000...	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.428571...	0.333333...	0.0	0.333333...
Adidam	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.5	1.0	0.5	0.25	0.142857...	0.0	0.333333...
Ananda C...	0.300000...	0.300000...	0.300000...	0.5	0.5	1.0	0.400000...	0.25	0.0	0.666666...
Atherius S...	0.400000...	0.400000...	0.400000...	0.428571...	0.25	0.400000...	1.0	0.5	0.25	0.5
Ammachi	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.333333...	0.142857...	0.25	0.5	1.0	0.0	0.333333...
Branahmi...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.25	0.0	1.0	0.0
Braco	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.333333...	0.333333...	0.666666...	0.5	0.333333...	0.0	1.0
Chen Tao	0.699999...	0.699999...	0.699999...	0.444444...	0.625	0.25	0.571428...	0.285714...	0.142857...	0.285714...
Children o...	0.699999...	0.699999...	0.699999...	0.625	0.444444...	0.25	0.571428...	0.285714...	0.142857...	0.285714...
Chopra, D...	0.300000...	0.300000...	0.300000...	0.5	0.285714...	0.5	0.400000...	0.25	0.0	0.666666...
Church in ...	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.714285...	0.5	0.285714...	0.25	0.333333...	0.0	0.142857...
Church U...	0.899999...	0.899999...	0.899999...	0.666666...	0.5	0.333333...	0.444444...	0.222222...	0.111111...	0.222222...
Concerne...	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.600000...	0.5	0.5	0.285714...	0.428571...	0.333333...	0.166666...	0.142857...
Church of ...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.166666...	0.166666...	0.333333...	0.25	0.0	0.0	0.5
Discordia...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.100000...	0.166666...	0.166666...	0.333333...	0.25	0.0	0.0	0.5
Divine Lig...	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.200000...	0.142857...	0.333333...	0.25	0.200000...	0.333333...	0.0	0.333333...
Eckankar	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Figure 8. Sample of ORA Similarity Correlation of NRM by NRM Dichotomized data.

As before, these data were visualized as a sociogram. After examining different thresholds, a threshold of 0.675 was chosen because it best isolated the most nonviolent NRMs. At this threshold, the MOVE NRM broke off from the violent cluster, leaving seven of the eight violent NRMs clustered together.²⁰⁸ Figures 9 and 10 display a sociogram with a 0.675 threshold. Figure 9 presents the entire network; Figure 10 focuses on the “violent cluster” that contains seven violent and six nonviolent NRMs. Similar to the non-dichotomized data from the previous section, this analysis yielded results where the violent cluster included NRMs that were 50% violent, a three percent change from the first method.

²⁰⁸ MOVE is a NRM that did not have some of the attributes that the other more traditional violent NRMs had. Their message was mostly anti-racial and did not have elements of supernaturalism, group fragility, or any apocalyptic teachings. Members lived on a compound and were free to come and go.

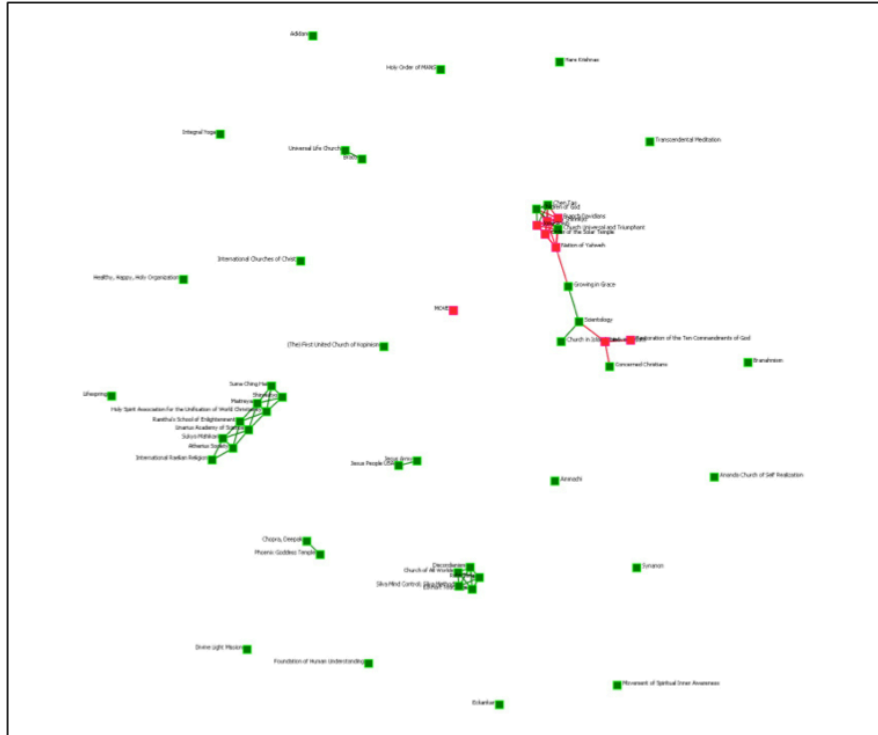


Figure 9. ORA depiction of NRM by NRM Dichotomized Network with SC value of 0.675. The violent NRMs are depicted in red.

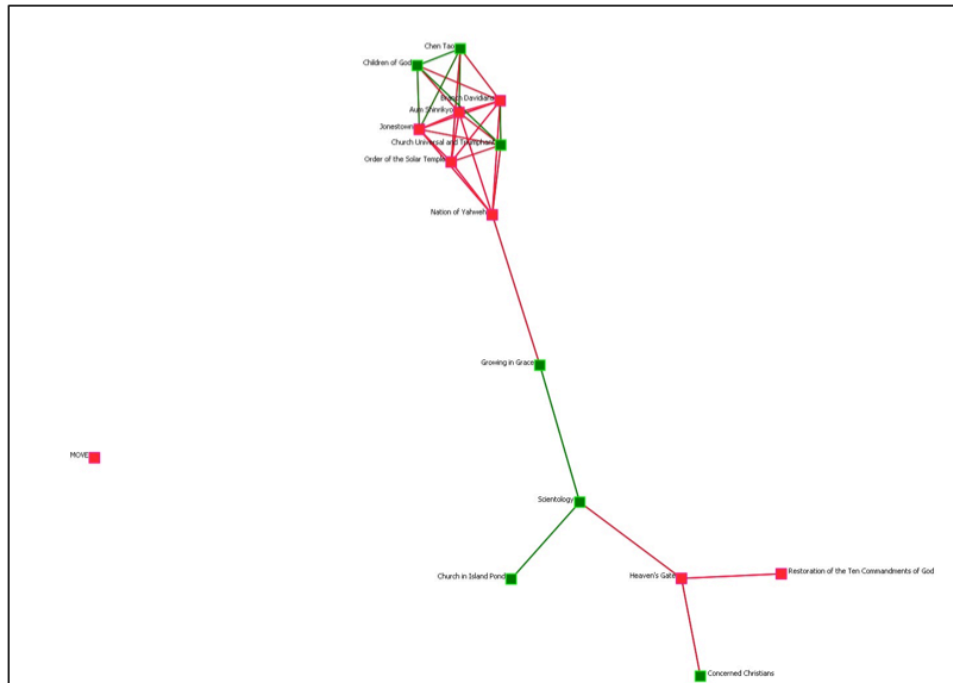


Figure 10. Zoomed in ORA depiction of NRM by NRM Dichotomized Network with SC value of 0.675. The violent NRMs are depicted in red.

4. Analysis of the Violent Cluster

The next step after culling the violent cluster from the previous section (Figure 10) is to determine whether any attributes stand out as being more aligned with violent NRMs. For this, a NetDraw sociogram of just the violent cluster NRMs and their associated attributes was generated (Figure 11) where the size of the nodes indicates which attributes are most prevalent. These results are also reflected in Table 2, which lists the number of ties there are to each attribute by group type. Both Figure 11 and Table 2 suggest that dramatic denouements, absolute authority, isolationism, and apocalyptic teachings distinguish violent NRMs from nonviolent NRMs in this cluster as they have the largest percent difference, and they are graphically more oriented to the violent NRMs. These results are only an analysis of the sub or violent cluster and do not represent the entirety of the NRMs and the attributes that are analyzed in the next section.

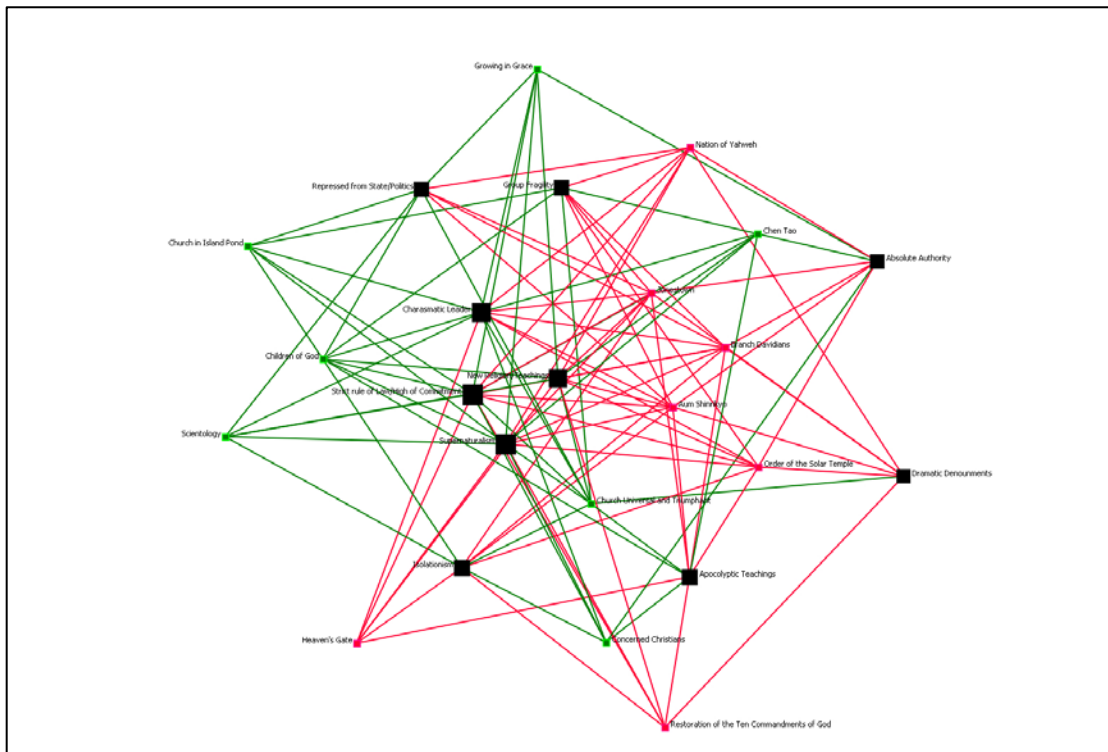


Figure 11. NRM by Attribute Network of dichotomized violent cluster. The violent networks are denoted in red and the attributes are black squares. The larger the square, the more ties the attribute has with the NRMs.

Table 2. Attribute analysis of the violent cluster network.

Attribute	# Violent	# Nonviolent	% Violent
Dramatic Denouements	7	1	88
Absolute Authority	5	3	63
Isolationism	6	4	60
Apocalyptic Teachings	6	4	60
New Religion/Teachings	7	5	58
Strict Rule of Law/High Commitment	7	7	50
Supernaturalism	7	7	50
Group Fragility	5	5	50
Charismatic Leader	6	7	46
Repression	4	5	44

5. Analysis of the Attributes

Table 3 summarizes data from the originally scored database (Appendix) in order to determine (using t-tests) where the average attribute scores differ significantly between the violent and nonviolent groups. As the table indicates the average scores for all but the last two attributes differ significantly between the violent and nonviolent NRMs, suggesting that all of the first eight attributes matter. However, comparing the results of this table in conjunction with Figure 1, it appears that the attributes dramatic denouements, strict rule of law, apocalyptic teachings, and isolationism are more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent ones. Not only are they the top four ranked attributes in terms of difference but, also in Figure 1, they all are located on the far right of the graph where the violent NRMs are located. To be sure, some nonviolent NRMs are located in this area of the graph as well, but most are not.

Table 3. Comparison of Average Scores for Attributes of Violent and Nonviolent NRMs

Attribute	Average Score			
	Violent	Nonviolent	Difference	Statistically Significant?
Dramatic Denouements	4.000	0.114	3.886	Yes
Strict Rule of Law	3.875	0.932	2.943	Yes
Apocalyptic Teachings	3.750	0.818	2.932	Yes
Isolationism	3.625	0.750	2.875	Yes
Supernaturalism	4.125	1.750	2.375	Yes
Group Fragility	2.875	0.523	2.352	Yes
Charismatic Leader	4.250	2.045	2.205	Yes
Absolute Authority	3.125	1.182	1.943	Yes
Repression	1.750	0.932	0.818	No
New Religion/Teachings	3.000	2.273	0.727	No

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IV. CONCLUSION

This study centered on determining if violent New Religious Movements shared certain attributes that could be compared to other NRMs to determine their propensity for violence. Its goal is development of a model that a government or civil authority could use to compare a budding religious movement to determine if it may become violent. This study only included post-World War II NRMs to limit the scope of research, and religious sects were excluded.

A review of relevant literature in the study of NRMs and religious violence highlighted ten attributes that seemed to be prevalent in violent NRMs: dramatic denouements, strict rule of law/high commitment, supernaturalism, new religion/teachings, isolationism, apocalyptic teachings, charismatic leader, absolute authority, group fragility, and repression. Although many of these attributes reside in mainstream religions, it is the combination of these, especially at extreme levels, that exist in the violent NRMs. The definitions of each of the attributes are contained in Section I.

An in-depth analysis was conducted on four NRMs across the spectrum of violence. Aum Shinrikyo was selected because they attempted to commit mass violence against others with a WMD attack. The Branch Davidians were selected because they committed violence against others in self-defense. The People's Temple was examined because they committed violence primarily against themselves but also against others by whom they felt threatened. Scientology was selected in order to include a case study of a nonviolent NRM. Each of these NRMs was assigned a score in terms of the ten attributes in order to establish a baseline for the scoring system of the remainder of the NRMs. Scores ranged from 0 to 5 where a zero indicated no element of the attribute was present and a five indicated that it was at its most extreme.

The analysis began with a visualization of the NRM by attribute network. Next, similarity correlations were estimated and graphically examined using thresholds to determine whether a tie of similarity between two NRMs should be drawn. In each case,

the similarity correlation isolated a cluster consisting primarily of violent NRMs although some nonviolent NRMs were included. The study then focused on the violent cluster to determine if any attributes stood out as indicators of violence. Lastly, attributes across all of the NRMs were examined to determine if the average scores differed significantly between violent and nonviolent groups.

The results found that the attribute scores for dramatic denouements, strict rule of law, apocalyptic teachings, and isolationism were substantially more associated with violent NRMs than with nonviolent NRMs. These findings were confirmed in the visualization of the network as these attributes were distanced from the majority of the nonviolent NRMs. A comparison of each NRM to every other NRM in a test of similarity showed a distinct grouping or cluster appearing in both the original network and the dichotomized network. These clusters contained no more than 15 NRMs and the ratio of violent NRMs to nonviolent NRMs was not less than 50%.

The results of this analysis are that if this model is utilized, a comparison could be made with a budding NRM to determine historical similarities to the violent cluster. In essence, if this budding movement plotted in this cluster, history shows a 50 percent probability that violence could occur. In the violent cluster, dramatic denouements was the attribute that showed the greatest ratio of violent to nonviolent NRMs (7:1), while absolute authority, isolationism, and apocalyptic teachings also plotted more closely to the violent NRMs. Looking at the attributes alone, eight of the 10 studied were significant with respect to violent propensity in NRMs. Putting this together, if an NRM's attribute scores place them in the violent cluster after SNA, there is a 50% chance or greater that they may become violent.

The process utilized in this study will first allow the user to familiarize himself with a particular New Religious Movement and then provide a deeper understanding through the scoring process. Once this has been accomplished, the user can compare their movement to historical data to determine if they fall within the violent grouping.

From Table 3 and Figure 1, the attributes of dramatic denouements, rule of law/high commitment, isolationism, and apocalyptic teachings, when taken to more

extreme levels, were most associated in the violent NRMs. As a cautionary note, a dramatic denouement was the highest indicator of a tendency towards violence. However, a confrontation with this type of NRM may threaten the group, and this may cause the group to turn to violence and precipitate their final reckoning. While this study allows one to narrow the focus of budding religious movements and determine propensity for violence based upon history, ultimately, any NRM must be studied independently for any extenuating circumstances.

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APPENDIX: SCORED DATABASE

	Charismatic Leader	Absolute authority	Supernaturalism	Apocalyptic Teachings	Strict Rule of Law High Commitment	Isolationism	Group Fragility	Repressed from State/Politics	Dramatic Denouncements	New Religion Teachings	Violent
Aum Shinrikyo	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	5	4	Yes
Branch Davidians	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	2	5	2	Yes
Jonestown	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	5	2	Yes
Scientology	2	1	3	0	3	2	0	4	0	5	No
Adidam	2	2	0	0	2	4	3	0	0	3	No
Ananda Church of Self Realization	2	1	0	0	1	4	1	0	0	2	No
Atherius Society	2	1	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	5	No
Ammachi	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Branahmism	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Braco	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	No
Chen Tao	5	3	5	5	2	1	3	1	0	5	No
Children of God	3	1	2	2	3	0	4	4	0	3	No
Chopra, Deepak	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	No
Church in Island Pond	2	1	3	1	5	2	2	2	0	0	No
Church Universal and Triumphant	2	1	3	5	5	5	2	4	3	3	No
Concerned Christians	3	2	4	5	4	2	1	1	1	0	No
Church of All Worlds	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5	No
Discordianism	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	No
Divine Light Mission	4	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	No
Eckankar	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	No
Eckhart Teachings	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	No
Foundation of Human Understanding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	No
(The) First United Church of Kopimism	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	5	No
Growing in Grace	5	5	5	0	2	0	0	2	0	3	No
Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization (3HO)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Hare Krishnas	0	0	1	0	3	3	0	5	0	1	No
Heaven's Gate	5	1	5	5	5	5	0	0	0	5	Yes
Holy Order of MANS	1	0	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	No
Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity	5	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	No
Integral Yoga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
International Churches of Christ	0	0	3	1	1	0	5	4	0	0	No
International Raelian Religion	0	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	No
Jesus Army	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	No
Jesus People USA	1	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	No
Lifespring	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	No
Maitreya	5	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	No
MOVE	5	2	0	0	1	3	0	3	5	4	Yes
Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Nation of Yahweh	3	4	4	0	4	0	4	4	3	2	Yes
Order of the Solar Temple	5	3	5	5	3	2	5	0	5	2	Yes
Phoenix Goddess Temple	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	No
Ramtha's School of Enlightenment	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	No
Rebirthing	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	No
Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God	1	0	5	5	3	4	0	1	4	3	Yes
Shinreikyo	4	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Silva Mind Control; Silva Method	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	No
Sukyo Mahikari	3	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	0	2	No
Suma Ching Hai	5	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Synanon	4	5	0	0	5	4	0	4	0	0	No
Transcendental Meditation	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	No
Unarius Academy of Science	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	No
Universal Life Church	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	No

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